Marcel Ray Duriez

Nevaeh 71

Alone Together

‘Life can be as told by 15 different people they all have a sequel, and the story of the truth is untold.’

‘A Cult is nothing more than what my home to was and, I was not part of it looking back, and maybe that was a good thing, I think. Just a system of religious veneration and devotion directed toward a particular figure or object. A small group of people having methodical beliefs or practices regarded by others as strange or sinister. A misplaced or excessive admiration for a particular person or thing. Run, by nothing more than a mafia. A closed group of people in a particular- field, having a controlling

influence. Then I ask if I am any different.’

~Nevaeh~

Karly- Yep, just to think that night, I was plucking my pubs to- ‘he loves me- he loves me not.’ That too is my opening like this part of my book, it is all the same, I was never going to be the seconded time slop in high school, yet look at me now, my mother always said, ‘that is why we were so good, all the longing for your faith, to then crap on you too, like your man and this hellish world.’

My teachers thought that education was giving us a Rubik's cube to

play with, just the starts of why mayday is all crappy, find work is hard going to school was hard, and every man is the latter hard. ‘Suck’ and ‘crap’ are all a theme to my life and this day-to-day life.

Ball lightning was in the air and all around the Sky, ‘I cannot breathe,’ the man of color said, like so many times before yet Communism has taken over the new world order, yet rights are at their lowest ever in this world, and as a good Catholic girl in just out of high school, I was thinking about nothing more than the times back when I was there and younger then I am now when I took it in the butt instead of having good sex.

Nothing but death and removing history from the world were my last years to date, even it is starting to become too much when removing lady library is right, over rights of freedom and colors. I was also thinking about the time that Jenny defecated on a Pittsburgh police car, as did I. I was wondering if defunding the police officers was the right thing to stand behind now.

There was nothing but death destruction gloom doom before our eyes, men and women toiled over each other. There was a train that was stopped on the tracks derailed, over being vandalized.

I have opened all the Deming dyvik boxes of all seven, thinking nothing of it that was made by my grandmother for this night to happen under her witching tree were Jaylynn lies in unrest to this world, in the school the day before even and so the air always smelt like boy crap anyway. Slurping it up with something that I was getting used to, was not an oddity of my day. COVID-19 has come to the highest part of its peak in all our history of the earth, even in defiance boys are wearing girls' thongs as their masks over their face. As I said, ‘crap’ and ‘odd day,’ were the themes.

My day started with giving Ray a blowy even if he is Kellie's man, and yet he still gets into my panties- as he always did without any thoughts by me- other than what others my age were doing, anyways, well he was sitting on the toilet, it was the oddest day. Never did I think this would be the way I would remember, it is to mark one end to a fresh start of a deep dream, to end, and then just to find a fresh start, and an end once more to the world I knew before- nothing was the same and was never going to be.

Everyone in the whole United States around 4 A.M was hauled into their yards of the town and cities they were in,

meanwhile an unexpected raid of the radical soldier mostly in ruby red and black with high powered mechanical machine guns, and dainty respirators over their face and nose, most of the faces black in the skin color, we all were on the grass some assembled huddling out of fear and panic, in chaos likewise complete utter disorder and confusion.

I in my town is my story to recite there were many lights in the sky at twilight became sage grayish-black, then absurd, madding sounds and flashing, pulsating, blinking, shimmering, flickering, burgundy and a chartreuse lightness of lights, two unmanned flying

drones one after the other, went aloft, spraying a mist, fog, drizzle, and exhaust from them, of Coronavirus in chemical warfare highly concentrated toxins.

('Hit the ground!')

I remember all the haunting yelling.

(‘Cover your eyes and faces!')

-Then-

All at the same time, like- I- Karly, had the remembrances of my girls from when I was in my late teen years. yet all the time, I was holding Jenny had underneath my goodies the place of a man doing the eating of the major

wetness moments and her bouncing hard on my face. Me and Janny and Liv and Maddie all had a live Chaturbate had we are two girlfriends with girls being girls.

(Lovense ready! #lovense #new #18 #dildo #squirt. #new #young #school.)

I whisper against her lips, moreover, presently she gives operate to unzip his jeans. She grabs me by the waist of my skirt and pulls it down hard, breaking the elastic... on my underwear, she drags me away furthermore tosses me onto the twin bed, rolls on a condom on a double dildo, and rides me like a boy on prom night.

Jenny screamed- 'I liked a Virginia!' Now in between, I got many girly kisses from all 3 girls, unbuttoned her shirt read the chat room wall. Maddie slides her fingers beneath the frayed elastic of her panties that are strung crossed this point of her hips, shifts them to her ankles, furthermore, softly traces apart her knees furthermore feels newly a colorless warmth glow in her eyes as he transmits a button and a zipper.

I do not know what made it happen, like all of us ever so unclothed in the same chat room, the tips, or the thrill of it all. I do not know what caused the revolution with me liking girls all over

me, given and taking, girlcum, disregarding gazing up at her face. I slip her hands under my cotton wear and her body spasms and slackens, and she cups her small, cold boobs in my hands then appears the unyielding globules of her long-drawn nipples.

I felt myself get wet, drenched, and soaked. It came from inside furthermore, I could sense the flesh swelling, giving out that fluid… And Olivia A.K.A Liv smiled feather down at me then my face was to her, mid-center to be right.

So-o, I guess she could feel it coming. Jenny rolled me over, and I see

that pink steam hanging from her as she was ready to yell for more, likewise- I gathered the towel balled under my butt fall from being now pulled from my bottom cover and wet, crumpled on the floor, the sheets soggy.

I tried from it all, despite my face pulverized in the teddy bear that was Liv's on her bed, I squealed. Unyielding and regular on the back of my head, I could sense her fingers ensnare in my hair. She was removing my hair braids.

Now with her palms on pictured on my nape.

It transpired an immeasurable excitement feeling, I deemed. Plus, I at once grew wetter. Ought she pull on the naughty thing, like- I would have vociferated in the ejaculation.

Ravished by a girl was a new one to me, she clutched too tight ejaculation was on cam for the world to see. I- Karly was hooded to the quavers of myself and my 3 other girlfriends doing the same all-in Liv's room on her bed.

Furthermore, the stimulation thrilling of being on webcam, her mom and dad in the next room over; were bad girls, we know looking at all the boys in our cam-rooms over 1,000 each. Maddie

was at that time giving out sobs, moans, and groans.

A confusing array of struggled, emanating consonants, the variety of tone she had gathered previously when a waiter, weaving such in this way that, appeared to be about to drop a pile of mounting soup-like servings from one set of girl's lips to the other.

She presses her lips to me, and they are bronzing-pink, besides humid. Maddie and Liv, saying, 'I want to reach the top with her, and suck her, just for the high.' Her being me Karly, I remember, in my last thoughts of this life. All this goes through a girl's mind next to death. Jenny

was saying: 'do it girls and added it to the tip wall online on Chaturbate.'

As we carried on, desperate to understand all majestic heaving flesh; on the screen from all the man in the room- and our adolescent faces- yet almost 18.

Switched on Maddie's chest... I remember that I could like girls more than boys. I remember Maggie. And that is when this all started.

The ensuing romp so compelling happened out of the pulls of girls' clothes, beating over the covers.

Furiously, Jenny thrust kicked the door closed with her foot flush to the door

in a running lip, yet never did we lock it, or Liv's mom thinks she is on drugs with us.

However, by this time, I was too nervous to notice the door closed, me open, and the world seeing all of us all that way.

Oh, dream it, we slithered out over the floorboards. Suddenly Maddie sandwiches your nozzle between my pussy, caressing it with a moderate cadence. A small vessel to heed the stories leading.

For now, she becomes taken you in her beautiful mouth.

Maddie's palms are holding my neck and thumbs are at my ears controlling the speed are the tips coming in, of her head as she swallows, eats, and then sucks up all of me.

Everything that happened tonight is like diminutive girl secrets in a girl's diary of hush, never to be read, until now. Likewise, toward the gnarled palms of Liv's hands. Jenny was loving herself more than any of us, yet that was always her thing, even her man could not do what she needed or perceived herself.

All the kissing, caressing with soft mouth and tongue. I believe the continuous winding feathers of her

sinking heart furthermore can see a pinkish tinge flowering on the skin within her tiny, ironed hair.

Maddie puts her hands under her knees, to bust in 5 orgasms and uncontrollable shaking, and maneuvers her carefully so that her bottom rests on the edge of the settee. All naked now, hunched over each other toiled her mouth on her.

It is specifically as he thought this- the hair, these lips, the girl holes like mine yet not- furthermore, I stumble my hands under the rubber duck, she lost the feeling of her butt after the plunge was fair too hard to get in, furthermore the

other hole- we now had to enter like twins' counterparts with a nexus, (really it was just a 2-sided rubber peter!)

-And-

I joined her hole like the horse jockey that I am with many blue ribbons. On Maddie's bed let us me make out with Jenny and Liv's head is between her legs and knees buckle several times and we persist propping us up with our arm and legs and my face is pushed up into her and heirs.

-And-

Jenny is arching her back, pushing herself onto Liv's tongue, and

Maddie is hungrily groans say- 'do it girl, do it, get it!' Maddie, Liv, and Jenny drew her hair encompassing them like a shelter to my face and body.

Just like insane children, in the moonlight, crazed to passion, foaming rabid all done when we wanted to exclude the outside world and the pain and boredom of being a teenager in a city of crisis. We girls slid down to each other, submitting ourselves to the rest of him in the chatroom. Her neck. Her nipples. His tan copper-colored stomach. I am ever too white for the time of year.

She tasted the current of the river from the hole of my center. She

touched the heat of his erecting upon her eyelids. I tasted her alkaline in my mouth.

She played furthermore brought her backside to me. She considered my belly tighten under her, hard as aboard. Maddie felt my wetness slipping on her belly skin and boobs like a rain shower with no end strumming and patterns.

She observed her nipple around her pink lips than in my mouth and cradled her other breast in my calloused palm. I remember this all in a flash of thinking about death and the hell to come.

~*~

(Then my mind was ripped to the real moment.)

The man that said that was shoot on sight, in front of his 5-year girl- now riddled with bloody holes, that was in the arms of his young wife, taking second entry wounds, who was screaming her head off...

Yes, killed shot right in the head over and over as onlookers gazed in horror as the terrorist had him still by the dying deadhead and blood covered black hair with his limp body just dropped like a sack of cow-shit, all nothing more the hostages, in the starts of a new type of war.

As the sounds whimpering, from kids and families and nothing more than PJ's and nightwear, were out and out crying, hacking, gasping, crawling, squirming furthermore screaming while inhaling for the lungs to shut down and ventilators necessitated.

('Infiltrated and now we don't have guns or arms to fight back.')

Some like me got away, sprinting before the spraying, 'Karly run goes get the hidden guns, in the hidden armoire.' Said, my dad. I was in our home, I ended up getting all the guns, I was on the field, then everything went black, then I started to have strange dreams and

hallucinations of me being manufactured, from all the vapors.

I woke up in the hospital 3 years or so letter, like so many that were just held in-tents to dye, I made it out alive, yet the world was changed forever- time and life as before were halting, locked in your home, or dye from toxins, always having respirators on outside, and guns everywhere you look in an Earth looks unhealthy and jaundiced-looking.

'Not long after this I took my own life, and now you know my story. Yet do you blame me?'

'My dad was dead. Kellie made it yet was not there for me and I get why.'

Liv and Maddie- were looking down at me in the sterile hospital room, covered head to toe in bright ass blue plastic faces covered with shields.

'Karly, you dead?'

My gaiety dissolved; a grimace replaced my smirk. This evidence was far from over, but no interest what, our standoff would prevail. I kissed her forehead and sat down next to her to hold her hand until she awakens anew.

This was asked over and over. The night of her last day alive, for about a year.

Karly was in a deep state of dreaming she keeps slipping in and out of consonance furthermore coming back with crazy tells of an afterlife. Furthermore, muttering that she is a princess, of a deep vast fair a way underwater realm to her friends that gather around her, she was waking just for short flashes to declare that she was in separate worlds from the ones around her.

'So, you think you were a prince?'

'Yes!' Karly said.

At the gates to face my fate, the light bright, I hear this deep voice, one of faith something- I never, lost- even if in the darkest days of my lives, he said to me you have saved so may for a horrible life, and gave them another, you have made it to the kingdom of the Heaven’s.

-And-

All that you have saved, I feel must be saved as white angles, all that was deprived has been overlooked, I am forgiving to all and love all even if you must earn it, as you did so well. Nevaeh you are going to be the everlasting

highest promoted most beautiful white Heavenly angle to ever exist.

No. Including- I passed on to the other side- in the rays spinning around my body pulling me in at last to the holy ghost- and heavenly father, praying hands above us both, I was hugged and welcomed, by him as a child that is most loved and understood, like all of them to that were the misunderstood- and rejected.

(Back)

Nevaeh-

Nevaeh was there in spirit in 1999 looking down on her granddaughter.

She was at that moment thinking back to her life in the RESTAURANT.

Nevaeh- and WILLARD are seated at a dining table.

Nevaeh- 'Will Frieda be joining us after dinner?' This was asked of her at that moment at that time.

She was looking at WILLARD, it was a long flight, she said to them all.

Nevaeh, your stepdaddy, and I have determined it would be in your best excitement if we no longer fund this... life of yours. Here in this city.

Nevaeh- '...Papa...? She will see you tomorrow, right.'

WILLARD was shaking his head.

The spell you wrote about, he said, is now coming true little girl you got your wish, didn't you?

'Our church doesn’t approve of witchcraft’ he said to her.'

'You should be hung for your crimes.' He said to Nevaeh.

'You should be placed under a tree in the hopes of never rising from the ground. that you are dangled on.'

'She is just a child,' said the doctor.

'Hypnotherapy is now what I have to do over you.'

'Papa, he’s helping me. He’s not helping so much...,' said Nevaeh.

WILLARD was looking at his feet, just to stay out of the conversations.

'Nonetheless... we are cutting you off, from her now at this moment, and at this season, I have the paperwork here with me all you need to do is make it legal. With love, give this child up to foster care. Or you will see a lawsuit unlike you have ever in your many days.' Said, DOCTOR LORENZO, at that moment sunlight rushes in.

(Nevaeh is sitting, just looking in awe.)

I am so sorry; I may have been too late now.

'I know about the Dogs, the child beating, moreover, the crises at the home where you keep these kids looked up in.'

Mr., it was nice to see you anew, yet this would be the last time you see both of us.

'Doctor Lorenzo, you do not scare me.' He spoke.

'I was just telling Nevaeh- we have found it best to restrict your

financial help towards her, and you're fostering for her.'

Then DOCTOR LORENZO Restrict, Nevaeh in her arms?

'By how much, do you say? I want you to give her nothing from this point on she is safe.

(HE does not explain. Neither does Nevaeh, want me any more than fine.)

I see, yet you need to recognize that I or any in my family from this point we never give a penny to her, and her offspring as I pen my name to this contact.

'Her stepdaddy believes it will encourage her to find a new school to go to too.'

'Not your care,' she said to him.

'I am sure at this time she will never find love or a companion, or have an education, mark my word.'

'Mr.!'

'I’m…not feeling well.' Said Nevaeh.

(SHE stands, kisses WILLARD’s cheek.)

'I will see you tomorrow, Papa. Goodnight, Doctor Lorenzo.' Said, Nevaeh.

He chuckled immorally.

'No, honey you are coming with me.'

'I apologize if the sudden hurt to Nevaeh's yet in three days this week she might initially set you back financially,' Doctor, said.

'I need to get things ready for this new change.' Said the grandmother.

'I'll get by.'

'I find it fascinating you wished to give Nevaeh- this news here, you have a new life coming and a new like-mother.'

'Now- in a public space. To guarantee against a scene I imagine, take this child and give her love.' Said the doctor.

'Though I also imagine you were at one time quite used to public scenes. That child is crazy you will see. He spoke.

DOCTOR LORENZO walked out giving the middle finger behind her back.

'I’m not sure if I get your drift, I have power, Doctor.'

Then some moments pass…

'Professional!' He grumbled.

'A fine woman. A Christian woman, I can see that here in this contact. Nuts!' He grunted.

Part:

DOCTOR LORENZO, yes. I have written to him numerous times about her. Erudition I might need for Nevaeh's therapy. You never responded, thus I called you to step in with me.

Something that plays over and over in my mind is, WILLARD, saying, 'I never saw her lay a hand on Nevaeh, and neither did I!'

('Beating this is not true.')

'I was reading back on my notes of that night.' said DOCTOR LORENZO.

Note: 'Yes, she was nervous around all the kids but most of this one here. She could be an eccentric woman.'

'Nevaeh was more than difficult sometimes. But a daddy... a daddy could never harm her child, and that is what I was like to her.'

The next note:

'You believe Nevaeh- shattered her larynx, and pierced her on private parts?'

'Do you think that she could Dislocate her shoulder?'

He said, 'yes, yes I do.'

'WILLARD, you are a sick pervert!' I said this to him.

My said Journal:

'Nevaeh is disabled she had many falls as a girl.'

'I have other kids we look after that have witnessed these falls?'

'Every kid would tell me... the truth, but this one.'

I moved forward and read a page in my notes from Hope, where it said.

I got a phone call from my grandmother in 2002, that said this...

'Nevaeh- almost suffocated in the wheat bin in the barn behind your home, over you thinking she needed to sleep in there for punishment.'

I recall asking this question, 'you found her, why was she alone?' How do you think she got in there? Cross-examined, LORENZO.

'It was the town bullies some girls that got in and did this to her she said it was not me said the grandmother. yet when I walked in there was nothing around but 4 black crows looking at me oddly with glinting eyes.'

'Although you put her in there...?'

'I am not one to believe in paranormal events lady.' I have this in the records of my phone recording.

'I think Nevaeh may be schizophrenic or have signs of Alzheimer's disease if she is seeing things that are not real. She was diagnosed at the Mayo Clinic. Although she never returned for treatment.'

She said to me that she did not want to go back to the barn ever over things that should not be explained. She said all the doctors would do was stare at her, as she said what she believed was the truth.

Furthermore, yet you allowed this lady, this sick... woman you knew to be perilously psychologically unbalanced... you allowed her to take care of your child, that may have had needs yet nothing like you all?

Looking deep into my many notes:

'This child she... was kicked out of our church.' Said, WILLARD.

(Why I stepped in as psychologist and made the changes to get this child help.)

My notes said, 'So, you would leave her abandoned every day to be

beaten. To be resisted and to be burnt. To be abused sexually.'

That was different, all these kids would bestow their physical love, all at a different time- I had no choice- it is our history, as a signature of race. I found this vague, and then I thought more about the unseen, the paranormal acts, yet I know this is bad psychology, in all my studies of my practice.

'You had a choice, Mr.? Go on?'

'I can't!'

Part:

Dr. LORENZO-

I had the radio on that made me think about all this and look back on my notes, even after the fact.

'TWO ROADS, ONE fact, AND ONE LIES. IGNORE WHAT’S IN FRONT OF YOU OR OPEN YOUR EYES TO THE TRUTH! TWO ROADS ONE EASY, ONE HARD.'

GUESS WHICH ONE ALLOWS COMPLETE DISREGARD OF THE TRUTH?

(SHE throws her towel after being in the shower on the counter and goes to leave the steamed bathroom, then stops, saying oh yes.)

Part:

All of this was thinking back to 1999 in the RESTAURANT. Nevaeh- and WILLARD are seated at a dining table.

I recall him saying...

'It was a long effort getting here for you-wasn't child?'

'I will not see you tomorrow, this is it forever.'

'Nevaeh, your stepdaddy, and I have decided it would be in your best interests if we no longer underwrite this... life of yours. Here in this city, it is time to go, and find what you think you want.'

...Papa...? Said, Nevaeh.

The spell you wrote about came true. Said, WILLARD. He hands over the kid's first book that she ever wrote at 4 years of age.

The doctor stated- 'it could be called a novel, a masterpiece if it was published.'

'Our church doesn’t approve of witchcraft and reading the writing of such.'

Nevaeh- 'Yes, psychokinesis is not evil nor is it magic.'

'She’s helping me, Papa. More than you and your God have.'

'She’s helping so much...' Said, WILLARD.

'Nonetheless...we are ripping you off, by giving holy points of view.'

'With tenderness, I say this back to you.' Said, DOCTOR LORENZO.

'I read in Nevaeh's first book where she 2005, she and 22 other older teen catholic girls on a school bus, all lost their virginities with consent to the young hot, bus driver, I wonder if that was true and if the was truly the first time? Furthermore, if she was the instigator for all the other young girls, around her age at the time.'

The novel said, he is in his thirties-

'They all used him, for their first lust, and CUMING!'

'One after the other all felt sex for the first time, all on a field trip. If this was true, she was varying young and just as welling as all the miss lead teens in what they think is sin.'

It was nice to remember her by reading these books again.

DOCTOR LORENZO, said to Hope- 'you need to restrict her from others that are just trying to end the progress we have me?'

'By how much?'

'I want her to stay safe with social distancing.'

('SHE doesn’t answer. Neither does Nevaeh. When I made this clear to them in 2000. I don't think they believed the municipality, was not on their side when it came to interacting with other kids Nevaeh's age.')

'I see.'

'I believe that in time all of this will discourage her from finding a job. Or a husband.'

Nevaeh- I remember saying at the time, 'I’m... not feeling well.'

(Nevaeh SHE, kisses her hands that are finger laced at this time lost in the love within her mind. Taps her nose, and points to her temple and I knew the true story of all the crazy, that was taken as being insane.)

She was lost in her world of your love, I knew, and was okay not to stop it, at times I would say,

'I will see you tomorrow, Goodnight, or I am here it's Doctor Lorenzo. and she was daydreaming, yet I took that as nothing more than the mind of a very bright little girl.

(SHE EXITS IN AND OUT OF LIFE IT SEEMS, AS IF SHE DOWNLOADS Solely THIS MASSIVE approaches AND CAN SEE THEM BEFORE THEY TAKE PLACE.)

'I regret if the unforeseen destruction of Nevaeh's three days a week might originally set you back, Doctor.' said, Hope.

Doctor- 'It is all good I love to see this mind work.'

Then at that moment at that time, I look back into my many notes, 'I am going to work with her with faith.' Said Hope.

'I am sure that is fine with me and you two well get by.'

'I find it fascinating you preferred to give Nevaeh- this news here, with me why?'

'Now. Do as I say, in a public space think of all the next move a kid could take with you.'

'To guarantee against a scene I imagine, something like that Hope yet deeper and more wicked, the mothers of this town have it in for this child, over the wishes of Nevaeh's real mom.'

'Though I also imagine you were at one time quiet she was at public scenes

with all the kids that sleep in the same room as her.'

'I’m not sure if I got your drift, Doctor. In time you well.' Said Hope.

I have in my notes that I said to WILLARD, 'I am sure that this was all started by your wife...'

'A fine woman. A Christian woman. Slander this is, and a holy one at that.'

DOCTOR LORENZO- 'Yes sure it is- sure- sure.'

'I’ve written to your numerous times about her over 30 times.'

'Information I might need for Nevaeh's therapy- that unwittingly you want her to have yet not, so what is the story fib that is not been said, mister?'

'Likewise, you never respond to me or any in my agency.'

WILLARD-

'Yet you are sure that no one will lay a hand on Nevaeh!'

('Crown the clown is the fib you ask of me to say.')

'Yes, she was nervous about saying anything to you at all that could be taken the wrong way. She could be a

characteristic woman. Nevertheless, difficult sometimes.'

'Nevaeh was always a baby... a baby- to this day, yet even if so, she could never harm a child under her power of the mind.' He said, back.

My notes give my thoughts, 'Yet she could under a bewitchery.'

'Funny coming from a Ph.D.' He said back to me at the time.

DOCTOR LORENZO- I did not think that Nevaeh could have dislocated her shoulder?

I did not believe that Nevaeh- had many falls as a girl, that was showing the cuts and bruises.

DOCTOR LORENZO- 'You were witness to these falls?'

'I am not at liberty to say.' He spoke.

DOCTOR LORENZO- 'Nevaeh- almost suffocated by her mom and the other kids in her room in your care.'

DOCTOR WILUBR gave her reports to me.

'I re-read a part in her book that said. I remember some kids never coming back, walking down this many steeps of

blackness to their deaths, they would lead bad children said young Nevaeh to a room with a drop trap door, this was true when I went into the home and investigated that there was a pit were dogs would eat children by ripping them apart?'

WILLARD- 'You found an old wine cellar. How do you think she got in there, I don't know maybe by falling?'

'Nevaeh is It was the town bully instigator to all others.'

'We never put her or anyone of them there...'

'Your late wife was a schizophrenic, is your child also?'

'Yes, Leah was diagnosed at the Mayo Clinic.'

'Although she never yielded toward treatment.'

'Why would you ever have her work with these kids?' I asked.

'We needed help in times of uncertain times.'

'She didn’t want to go back. She said all the doctors would do was stare at her, over having so many kids to a man she did not know, and not remember why she was sleeping around.'

-And-

'Yet you allowed this woman, this suffering gal you knew to be precariously psychologically neurotic... you allowed her to take care of your grandchild and many others?' Said the Doctor.

'We did and I thought it would be a help to her and my wife as if a were self-treatment.' Said Nevaeh's grandpa.

'You would leave her alone every day to be tortured.

I didn’t think it was a clever idea, it was the thought of forgiveness of our church.'

Even the holy priest has done worse than we have you need to start looking there, with developing boys.

'To be struck and to be burnt. To be abused sexually. Guidance from the church.' I questioned.

'It was different- a different time I had no choice-

DOCTOR LORENZO You had a choice, Mr. Amsel.'

I have said too much now. He spoke.

'ONE fact AND ONE LIES.'

'IGNORE WHAT'S IN FRONT OF YOU OR OPEN YOUR EYES TO THE TRUTH!'

(All these thoughts came back as SHE throws her towel on the table and goes to leave, then stops.)

~*~

DOCTOR LORENZO- ' I have no problem treating Nevaeh- for free, sir. And she is getting better. And I do not doubt that someday she will be completely well.'

'So, you would be doing something kind,

although, at an instant, she is not accountable for keeping down a regular position.

'I will not see this girl, so damaged by your first wife, her mother, and you even any further abused by the intrigues of your second.'

'Yes, it is enough,' I remarked, greeting. 'Enough for forever to see her with others that are not you.'

I grimaced. For now, I am mocked. She was planning, but I was not going to yield to her desires. I breathed a low thundery grumble.

(My fingers carefully traced the configuration of my lips.)

'It's not the end, it's the beginning,' she disagreed in a whisper of warm breath.

I did not recognize I was holding my breath continuously, I let out a broad exhalation.

My lips curled into a half-smile at her kittenish fit.

My heart is beating fast, so fast.

My eyes are wide.

Three hours.

It has been three hours, and my mind is still in a haze. After my revelations negative, not a haze. Not even an impenetrable fog. It feels as if I am roaming about in a pitch-black room, seeking the light switch.

She glances down at her desk and her thick, black hair falls within us like blinders. I want a better look at her. I want something to grab me, something familiar.

I will perceive at any bit of her that might persuade me I am not losing my mind in my thoughts.

I clutch the sleeve of my nightshirt and wipe the gloss of spray off my brow.

'I’m fine,' I mutter. 'Long night.'

I see a scanty twinge in her eye, and she tilts her head. 'Why was it a long night?'

Shit.

I remember last seeing this man, in my mind.

(Then WILLARD bows his head, not looking at HER. He nods. He EXITS from the restaurant. LIGHTS linger on WILLARD and then FADE, as he walks to his car in the lot.)

November 2001, Hope- is on the sofa, a letter- in hand. HER eyes are red. Nevaeh- walks ON from HER- bedroom.

Nevaeh- 'I have Doctor Lorenzo after class today, so if you still want to have Chinese, I'll be home around seven.'

(Hope- grabs a tissue and wipes her eyes. 'Sure,' she said.)

'Uh-huh.' Said young Nevaeh.

(Hope never Moves from the sofa.)

She never asked what was wrong.

Her hands were on the letter, SHE reads, saying about her child's death.

'She won, she said I would lose my kid if I took heirs.' Muttered Hope.

'Get her way from me, she is hexed.' She said to Doctor Lorenzo, over the phone.

(The phone call)

'In the end, she always gets her way.'

'Who did?' Questioned the doctor.

Hope- 'The Mother and Grandmother.'

Hope said to Nevaeh, 'your daddy is in his grave over them! She finally found a way to pull me back in... she threatened to hex me- I did not believe she would do it. Oh, Nevaeh, I am so sorry. I know this affects you too.'

'I feel that they have done that with me also said, Nevaeh- how was in my office at the time I was on speakerphone, 'Nonsense.' Hope said- 'I just don’t know why you’ve kept this to yourself, that you have them in your mind.'

'Fear...!'

(2003 my office)

Doctor Lorenzo- 'I talked to her about this, and I have passed it off as child-like imagination.'

'Before.' Said Hope.

Nevaeh- 'Oh.'

'A lawsuit is coming I can feel it in my bones.' Said Hope.

I-Doctor Lorenzo asked, 'Nevaeh, have you ever called your stepdaddy?'

'No.' She said I did not even know I had one.

I-Doctor Lorenzo said, 'You do, his name is Titus Back. Decided to talk it

over? And if you want to know all about him and the others that are just like you

'Just like me?' I- Nevaeh questioned.

Nevaeh said, 'I’m never talking to that bitch again.'

'Nevaeh!' I- the doctor said.

Nevaeh- 'All I get is lies.'

Nevaeh- 'I have two daddies? And sisters? And they were born the same day as me, I thought I was an only child?'

I-Doctor Lorenzo said, 'You're not one and only, you have six sisters and 2 of them are identical to you.'

'So-o, I am a triplet?' Said Nevaeh.

'I knew about Sarah and when she was born, she had one brother and seven sisters, me being one. She died in 1997. Death by mother, in shaking-washing machines. Now I call her 'The Girl in the Window'. Yet there were a lot of kids with us so, I am not surprised.'

'I remember Sarah died in 1997 when Lily was 2 years old.' Said Nevaeh under her breath.

I-Doctor Lorenzo said, ‘Yet you remember this with photographic memory?’

I-Doctor Lorenzo said, 'Lily Anderson and her twin sister, Nevaeh.'

I-Doctor Lorenzo said, 'I have to say this to you know you have more half-sisters.'

'My last files give these dates there now outdated yet should know. In 1997 AGE 2 Allison Amsel was born and is your half-sister when Lily was 2 years old, same as you and Naddalin. Ava Amsel was born on the 19th of November 2000 you AGE 5 Birth Half-Sister Ava was born on November 19, 2000, when Lily was 5 years old. Adriane Amsel AGE 7, Adriane was born in 2002 when Lily was 7 years old.'

-And-

'Now you would have been a triplet if Naddalin were alive, Naddalin Natalie was born, the daughter of Leah and Ray. She had six sisters. She died on July 19, 1995. (Still Born death the same day as birth.) Titus Back is the stepdad and oversee this child's way.'

'I know these girls; I have lived with them. Yet never would have thought we would be blood.' Said Nevaeh.

'Sorry.' I spoke.

'I should complain, right?' Said Nevaeh.

'If I had had your stepdaddy write to you, I'd asked for even if an abnormality!'

Doctor Lorenzo- 'He thinks you look just like Naddalin, even down to the eyes, you have the same eyes for sure he said in his letter, and that it is hard for him to look at you are seeing her and having grief.'

(Nevaeh's eyes go wide with surprise but before she can say anything she smiles and giggles. Oh, sure now that all makes sense. All the minds join her and like shared blood they laugh together for a few seconds even in dying, part last on in the heart and mind forever.)

'I’m sorry I got all twiggy.' Nevaeh said to me.

'Err!'

'And I hate leaving you in lurch like this, yet now-wise.'

'Nevaeh, oh, please don’t worry. You should not have any issues with them.' I remember saying.

'I already do it in school.' Said Nevaeh along with- 'I’ll be fine, I promise. I’ll just need you to surmise what these girls are to me.' Announced Nevaeh.

'You know... the reason I don't talk to the others and too you only... I was... a little bit embarrassed about this.'

I-Doctor Lorenzo said, 'Nevaeh, for heaven’s sake, why?

I do not think your crazy child ever for saying what you see and feel. That is why I am here.'

Hope said to Nevaeh- 'You! You are never... you never stop. No matter what. You never disclose this to them, and don't let them get the best of you.'

Nevaeh- 'Oh, I... tell limited, I’m sure of those I trust.'

'No. Never say anything to anyone.' Said Hope.

I-Doctor Lorenzo said, 'You don’t say anything. You go to class. You will stay a student like everyone else.'

I-Doctor Lorenzo said, 'You’re in therapy three days a week. Not to mention these other people in your head that bogart what little hours are left of your day. Just keep them out as much as you can with control.'

Remember you are out of that house, and you are away from them.

Nevaeh- 'I No!' (Returning the laughter.)

'Yes!'

'I appreciate everything you have done for me.’ She said to the doctor.

'I- Doctor Lorenzo wrote a five-hundred-dollar deposit check out of my account and signed a contract for Nevaeh to have a saving's for just in case!'

'It was tremendous!'

'To get out of it that home that is, Doctor Lorenzo had hired a lawyer and declare me mentally competent!'

(THEY both find this hysterical and stumble over each other.)

You know, once I would have seen a check and had no idea where it

came from, this is more money than I have seen in my life.

Now... I am making progress... it is proof I am getting better right, and you believe in my education to come.

You are so much more than solely better than them. No matter how bad it has been... that how good they will become; you have always been better...

Yes, I think you have come a long way.

'I WATCH YOU; I DO WHEN WE GO WALKING, ME AND YOU. YOU SMILE AT THE ODDEST LITTLE THING. A LITTLE GIRL JUST SITTING ON A

SWING; MAKING TINY PORTRAITS OF SOME LONG-FORGOTTEN- PRINCE, AND A STORY TO GO WITH.

WHAT COULD IT BE? I THINK TO MYSELF, WHAT DOES SHE SEE? THAT I NEED TO WITH HER EYES. I WATCH YOU; I DO AND I LISTEN TO YOU TOO. EVERY WORD AND EVERY ACTION YOU HAVE AN MAKE, YOU SAY THINGS THAT NOBODY ELSE WOULD SAY. THAT MAKES YOU extraordinary.

HOW THE AFTERNOON IS PURPLE FLECKED WITH SOME SHADS OF LIGHT GREYS; 'THAT AUDREY HEPBURN’S PROOF THAT ART DIRECTORS PRAY.' 'I AM GOING TO BE

A LOT LIKE HER SOMEDAY.' SAID, NEVAEH.

'JUST LIKE THAT, I CAN’T KEEP UP. WITH HOW FAST YOU THINK.'

'IT’S LIKE A RACE IS ON WITHIN YOUR MIND.'

'BUT IT’S, OKAY?' QUESTIONED NEVAEH.

'It is an Immeasurable Pursuit.' She stated back.

Part: 1

Karly- Look- at this old photo from-

Nevaeh town, and her mother from the past.

The uniformed man motioned lazily, not paying attention. Olivia accelerated, edging around him, and heading for the gate.

He shouted something at us, All the same, and all, held his ground, waving frantically to keep the next car from following our bad example.

The man at the gate wore a matching uniform. As we approached him, the throngs of tourists passed, crowding the sidewalks, staring curiously at the pushy, flashy Porsche.

The guard stepped into the middle of the street before us. Olivia angled the car carefully before she came to a full stop.

The sun beat against my window that I was now looking out, and she was in shadow. She swiftly reached behind the seat and grabbed something from her bag.

The guard came around the car with an irritating expression and tapped on her window angrily.

She rolled the window down halfway, and I watched him do a double-

take when he saw the face behind the dark glass.

‘I'm sorry, only tour buses allowed in the city today, miss,’ he said in English, with a heavy accent. He was apologetic to both of us, now, as if he wished he had better news for the strikingly beautiful woman such as us.

‘It's a private tour,’ Olivia said, flashing an alluring cute flirty smile.

At once, she reached her hand out of the window, into the sunlight.

I froze some until, at that moment, I realized she was wearing an elbow-length, tan glove.

She took his hand, still raised from tapping her window, and pulled it into the car some. She put something into his palm and folded his fingers around it, saying there you go.

His face was dazed as he retrieved his hand and stared at the thick roll of money he now held. The outside bill was a thousand-dollar bill.

‘Is this a joke?’ He mumbled.

Olivia's smile was blinding.

‘Only if you think it's funny.’

He looked at her, his eyes staring wide.

I glanced nervously at the clock on the dash. If Marcel stuck to his plan, we had only five minutes left.

‘I'm in a wee bit of a hurry,’ she hinted, still smiling.

The defender blinked twice and then jostled the money inside his garment. He took a step away from the window and waved us on. None of the passing souls seemed to notice the hushed exchange. Olivia drove into the downtown, and we both sighed in satisfaction.

The street was very narrow some, cobbled with the same color tones as the

faded cinnamon-brown buildings that darkened the street with their shade. It had the feel of an alleyway.

Many red flags decorated the walls, spaced only a few yards apart, flapping in the wind that whistled through the narrow lane.

It was crowded, and the foot traffic slowed our progress.

‘Just a little farther,’ Olivia encouraged me; I was clutching the door handle, ready to throw myself into the street as soon as she vocalized the word.

She drove in quick spurts and immediate stops, and the people in the

crowd shook their fists at us and declared dangerous words that I was glad I could not follow.

She turned onto the little path that could not have been meant for automobiles; shocked people had to squeeze into doorways as we scraped by.

We saw a different street at the end. The buildings were taller here; they leaned together overhead so that no sunlight touched the pavement- the thrashing red flags on either side nearly met.

The mob was more concentrated here than everywhere else. Olivia stopped the automobile.

I had the door unlatched ere we were at a halt.

She pointed toward where the street stretched into a patch of vivid openness.

‘There stood at the austral end of the plaza. Drive orderly crosswise, to the right of the clock pillar. I'll find a way around-’

Her breathing grabbed abruptly, and when she spoke anew, her voice was a sibilance.

‘They're omnipresent?’

I suspended in place, All the same, and all, she launched me out of the automobile. ‘Ignore about them. You have two moments. Run, Bell, go!’ she screamed, escalating out of the car as she discoursed.

I prepared not to pause to observe Olivia melt into the obscurations.

I did not stand to close my door following me. I shoved a massive gentlewoman out of my way and drove flavorlessly out, head down, paying little attention to anything. All the same and

all, the uneven stones underneath my toes.

Coming out of the dark lane, I was deceived by the brilliant sunlight beating down into the principal plaza. The wind whooshed into me, flinging my hair into my eyes, and blinding me further.

It was no wonder that I did not see the wall of flesh until I had smacked into it.

There was no pathway there, no crevice between the close-pressed bodies.

I pushed against them furiously, upholding the hands that shoved back. I heard interjections of exasperation and

even pain as I battled my way through, All the same, and all, none existed in a conversation I understood.

The faces were obscured with violence and astonishment, envelope by the ever-present vermilion.

A young deep brown hair woman disapproved of me, and the chlorophyll and white shawl coiled encompassing her nape resembled a grim bruise.

A child, lifted on a man's arms to see over the mob, beamed down at me, his lips widened over a set of impressionable angel fangs.

The multitude jostled around me, revolving me to the wrong regulation. I was glad the clock was so visible, or I would never keep my course uninterrupted.

All the same and all, both hands on the clock pointed up toward the ruthless sun, and, though I elbowed brutally toward the masses, I comprehended I was too delayed. I was not partially transversely. I was not going to make this.

I was dumb, tame, and human indeed if I am not eternally, furthermore we were all going to die because of that.

I thought Olivia would get out.

I assumed that she would see me from some dark shadow and know that I had been displeased, so she could go back to Ray.

I listened, above the angry exclamations, trying to hear discovery: the gasp, the scream, as Marcel came into someone's view.

Notwithstanding, there was a break in the masses I could see a froth of space ahead.

I shifted frantically approaching it, not realizing continuously I damaged my legs next to the bricks that there was

a wide, rectangular fountain set into the center of the courtyards.

I was all most weeping with relief as I tossed my leg over the edge and ran through the knee-deep liquid. It scattered throughout me as I tossed my way across the pond.

Even in the sun, the wind was glacial, and the wet made the cold painful.

Likewise, the fountain was extremely amiss; it let me intersect the axis of the intersection furthermore than some in mere instants.

I did not pause when I hit the far edge- I used the low wall as a springboard, throwing myself into the droves of people.

They moved more readily for me now, avoiding the icy water that splattered from my dripping clothes as I ran. I glanced up at the clock once more.

A deep, booming chime echoed through the square. It throbbed in the stones under my feet. Children cried, covering their ears.

And I started squealing as I ran.

‘Marcel!’ I screamed, knowing it was useless. The crowd was too loud, and

my voice was breathless with exertion. All the same and all, I could not stop screaming.

The clock rang repeatedly. I ran past a nude young girl child in her mother's arms is hair was almost white in the dazzling sunlight.

A gathering of tall gentlemen, all wearing red blazers, called out information as I barreled through them. The clock tolled repeatedly and repeatedly.

On the other side of the men in blazers, there was a break in the throng,

space separating the voyagers who milled aimlessly encompassing me.

My sights scrutinized over the vast dark narrow passage to the right of the wide square edifice under the tower.

I could not understand the street level, there were nevertheless too many youngsters and teens on the way.

The clock told again, and the rings cried out.

(Back)

Nevaeh- Kids like me often shit themselves when they die, I remember that I did, hanging lip from a tree branch.

Their meats slack and their hearts tremble loose and everything else just… shits for an excuse like life itself.

Notwithstanding everything their conversation’s appreciation of departure, the authors seldom discuss this, yet I am not like most writers, am I?

Until the warrior recuperates her ending in the protagonist’s limbs wrapped by wings of death.

Part: 2

Just like me, this is not here anymore…

It was arduous to see now, more than ever. Without the kids, teens, and

tweens, to break the wind, it whipped at my face and burned my eyes.

-And-

I for one at that significance could not be one century present certain if that were the reason following my tears, or if I were sobbing in disappointment as the clock hands rounded the face again, and the bell grows more unintelligible.

A large family of ten stood nearest to the alley's opening, just some hours after.

The two girls wore blue dresses, with matching ribbons tying their brunette hair back, just like my uniform.

The father was not tiny or large. Moments like death, they command neither awareness to the stigma oozing beyond her cheeks, nor how the smell makes her eyes stream as she leans in for her departure embrace with the end, like the last kiss of no having love.

I mention this by way of warning nothing when I pass not thinking about my gentle friends finding me in such a way… that your storyteller experiences no before-mentioned violence. Furthermore, if the irksome certainties of slaughter

turn your linings to rainwater, be encouraged promptly that the book pages in your fingers utter of a girl, miss, daughter, and a nobody, who was to spoil as maestros equal to ethnomusicology. They were comfortable regularly after what a knife behaves to the flesh.

She has fallen herself, now words both the criminal furthermore they simply would beam at eyeteeth to listen

Like self-government in ashes following her. A municipality of connections and bones deposited at the foundation of the sea by her palm.

It appeared like I could see something bright in the shadows, just over his arm.

A girl like me was a beautiful child, I would know, again she looks just like me, young innocent, and sweet for her age, not smart yet not dumb, glossy skin, honey-sweet smile.

Furthermore, yet I am sure she would still obtain a way to destroy me if she knew I put these messages to document.

Initiate me up and leave me for the ravenous Nighttime.

I hastened toward them to linger within my godchild known as Bell, attempting to see past the stinging tears.

However, I think someone should at most thermonuclear risk to segregate her from the myths mentioned regarding her. Within her. Through her and encompassing her. Bell, a girl some called a lost Descendant, of mine.

Understanding of fashion if King. Or Crow. But most often, zip at any.

Nevermore lived in the environment you call your own, as I did for years and never truly knew that I was,

over in my mind at the time I was someone other than me.

All this death- is a new life for me? I acknowledge I could nevermore see the diversity. Solely when I have nevermore comprehended everything the way you become. Furthermore, continued girl well-known or odious for this at the end?

As if I were from me and in the days rushed ahead in my godchild, I could see a girl named ball, as the clock hands turned, and the littlest girl clamped her fingers encompassing one of the boy's lengthy fingers.

As I remained, I see other kids, one she pulled on her mother's elbow and pointed toward the shade. Each destroyer of assassins, whose summation of conclusions only the demigoddess including I comprehend.

Just like me as a child the rust-brown and copper-colored soft curls on the right side of recklessly. At moments I wonder if this is me and my life? Yet I am not sure, are you? Is this girl me?

Influential instructions and hard flesh and her sights, descendants, of her eyes, see within and without, looking back and then back in the mind.

Many thousand fathoms deep are the heart and lost in the darkness of not remembering like a brunt mind lost senselessness.

Towing you into cray laugh even as he suffocated you, the rain that is your sobs.

Then at that second the clock ticked and ticked, and I was so closer immediately to that.

I was nearby enough to hear her high-pitched whine. Her father gazed at me in astonishment now as I bore down on them, scratching out Marcel’s name over and over repeatedly.

His lips grazed hers, emotional and curling pale.

They had reached laced on the Bridge of hushed, and written in the books of sh-h, a melancholy blush thrusting upon the arches of heaven.

Her palms had roamed her back, contemporary tingling on her skin, the mature girl snickered and spoke something to her mother, indicating near the obscurations again impatiently. The unparalleled feather-light stroke of her tongue against hers set her trembling, heart racing, interiors throbbing with craving.

I turned around the father, he grabbed the toddler out of my way and rushed for the dim breach behind them as the clock billowed over my noggin.

‘Marcel, knew all too well this was not right of me!’ I admit, all the same, and all, my voice was lost in the screech of the chime. I could see him immediately. Furthermore, I could see that he could not discern me.

It was him, I remember him, yet I do not remember him like me, I remember him through my grandchild, no delusion this time at all, just the feeling of me wanting.

'Wrong did not matter, over I was always WRONG.'

Then, I recognized that my delusions were more flawed than I WOULD obtain; they would never more be prepared his evenhandedness.

So, everybody gravitated freely like terpsichorean before the music paused, vibration still thrumming along their strings.

She would open her eyes, find him staring back in the smoky light she was lusting hard, or was it all me?

A waterway murmured beneath them- and a sparing of fountains, its indolent flow spurting out into the pond.

Presently as she yearned to. Just as she necessity. Entreating her would not asphyxiate; I understand what it is like to have a life without breathing.

Her last overnight in this city. A part of her did not want to say goodbye. Disregarding ere she left, she would be required to understand. She owed herself that, at least, and so did I even if feeling guilty.

'Are you convinced?' he asked.

She had gazed up into his eyes, then.

Brought to a moment where she had him by the hand.

'I’m sure,' she muttered.

The gentleman was disagreeable.

Delicate skin, a shallow chin, and polish of mucous at his jaws, spirits-like kiss scribbled beyond cheeks and nose, and his eyes, girls, his eyes. Blue as the sunburned heaven. Sparkling shimmering like stars in the still of the pure evening. His expression was very tranquil; like he was dreaming pleasant things. The shooter skin of her breast was bare there

was a small pile of white fabric down her feet. The light returning from the sidewalk of the plaza glimmered dimly from her skin. His chest was bare.

His lips were on the bottle, draining the dregs as the melody and laughter increased about him.

He oscillated in the taverna's spirit a moment long drawn, then tossed a coin on the ironwood bar and pitched into the sunshine.

His eyes wandered the cobbles foremost, bleary-eyed with a drink.

The streets were becoming jammed, and he drove his way through

the crush, intent only on home and dreamless sleep.

He did not look up. Did not descry the figure hunched atop a stone waterspout on a roof opposite, clothed in plaster white and caldron gray.

The girl followed him limp away across the Bridge.

Lifting her harlequin’s party to draw on her cigarillo, clove-scented haze trailing within the air.

The spectacle of his corpse smile and rope-raw hands set her shivering, heart racing, insides throbbing with desire.

I had never seen anything more wonderful even as I ran, gasping and squealing, I could appreciate such. Including the last seven months meant nothing. And his words in the forest meant zero.

Furthermore, it did not matter if he did not want me. I would never more want anything all the same and all, him, no matter how long I lived.

The clock told, and he took a large stride toward the light.

Her last never night in this municipality. A part of her still did not want to say goodbye. Simply before she

left, she had wanted him to know. She owed him that, at least.

‘No!’ I screeched. ‘Marcel, look at me!’

He was not overhearing. He smiled very slightly. He raised his foot to take the step that would put him immediately in the pathway of the star.

I pushed into him so hard that the force would have hurled me to the area if his arms had not caught me and held me up. It knocked my breath out of me and snapped my head back.

His dark eyes uncovered slowly as the clock told again.

He glanced down at me with quiet surprise.

‘Astonishing,’ he said, his beautiful voice full of awe, insignificantly amused. ‘Joh was right.’

An adumbration exhausting the shape of a cat sat on the roof beside her. It remained paper-flat and semi-translucent, black as death.

Its tail curled around her ankle, possessively. Cool rainwater drained out through the town’s ducts and into the pond. Just as she yearned to, merely as she must, however praying she would not sink.

‘Marcel,’ I tried to heave, All the same, and all, my decision had no noise. ‘You've got to get back within the obscurations. You should move!’

He resembled bemused. His hand touched softly upon my cheek.

He did not resemble to discern that I was trying to overpower him backward.

The girl watched her mark slink as she slowly nodded.

I could have been struggling against the lane walls for all the journeys I was proceeding.

Just what felt like moments before, she was standing in a much different.

'I’m convinced,' she murmured. I was in the room I had been in for years, lost in my own experience of not having one, it ought to have been a small, sparse for bad girls like me, all she could bear, yet had to be there.

Although moments before I remember the seance of me setting out rose-colored candles all around her and her drawings, that would glow in the dark disturbingly, and water lilies littered all about my clean white sanatorium-like sheets monopolization tacked down as if

to invite me in, and the girl lost within me had smiled for the first time at the sugar-floss generosity of it all.

There too, in that room with dim light, the clock told, All the same, and all, she did not behave as if time was changing around her.

It was very strange, looking out the crack of the door, all the low sounds, and the sound of the ticks became heightened, for I knew we were both in mortal danger, as I slipped to where I was occupying within another. Still, in that flash, I felt proper.

I remember looking to the window, staring at the majestic, magnificent city of the grave gods all the others that understand life more than I.

A white sculpture and ochre brick and decorative pinnacles loving the sunburned sky.

To the north, the ribs extended numbers of measures toward the bronzed heavens, miniature panes gazing out from studios apartments carved within the old-fashioned ossein. Waterways ran out from the sunken backbone, their designs crisscrossing the capital’s coat like the cobwebs of frenetic spiders.

Elongated adumbrations displayed the congested highways as the light of the secondary sun dimmed, the initial sun long considering dissolved, splitting their three, moody red siblings to attain watch by the jeopardies of always twilight.

The clock said, everyone was feeling to me as being the same, and none of them reacted to this as I did.

It was very exotic, for I perceived we were both in mortal exposure.

Still, in that twinkling, I felt adequate.

Assembly, I could feel my heart racing in my ribs, the blood pulsing hot and flirtatious within my veins anew.

Oh, if solely it had remained actual dark. If it were, he would not see her, he would me.

She was not sure she commanded him to see her through this.

The girls increased up behind her, wreathed in virgin steam and vapor.

My lungs swelled deep with the sweet scent that came off her skin. It transpired similarly there had never breathed any opening in my chest.

Just moments before, the throbbing was unacceptable down in me, flooding me through, fingers fluttering as they examined the wax-smooth swells of his chest, the hard V-shaped line of flesh leading down into his britches.

Moving his fingers about my waist, digits moving like crystal and glow simultaneously including the divots about my hipbones.

I remained certain not improved, All the equivalent, furthermore alone, as if there had remained no flaw in these initial places.

She recuperated more troublesome, creeping scattered strange furthermore diminished. Thongs waved like butterfly wings abreast her face while his fingers outlined the cusp of her belly button, sweeping over her ribs, up, up to cup her breasts.

‘I can't understand how agile it was. I didn't feel a thing they're particularly good,’ he reflected, clenching his eyes anew and crushing his lips against my hair. His speech was like sugar and red velvet.

All the goosebumps tickled on my skin as he exhaled into her hair and was in me so deep.

‘I can't believe how quick it was. I didn't feel a thing they're particularly good,’ he mused, closing his eyes again and pressing his lips against my hair.

Hooking her vertebrae, thrusting behind upon the hardness at his groin, individual hand snagged in his rebellious links. I could not breathe, yet in a way like never. I could not claim. I did not require them to create or to conclude.

His speech was like molasses, ‘Release, that hath engulfed that syrup of my breathe, hath had no control still against the grace,’ he moaned, and I remembered the line spoken by Romeo in the tomb. The clock boomed out its final

chime, ‘You smell just the same as always,’ he went on to say.

Training, groaning as their lips met repeatedly, she mismanaged including the cufflinks in his ruffled sheathings, all fingers and sweating, and shivers. Removing their shirts off, all the girls around me also at this point were naked showing their frosting covered cupcake tweeny showing their skin like us, I crushed my upper and lower lips to him, sinking onto the pavements. Just she and he, now. Peel to naked skin. Her moans or his, she could no longer tell.

‘So, this is hell, even so, it was not hurtful. I do not mind. I'll take this.’ ‘I'm not lifeless,’ I disrupted.

‘Furthermore, neither are you! Please, Marcel, we must walk. They can't be far away!’

I struggled in his arms, and his brow furrowed in bewilderment.

‘What was that?’ He asked respectfully.

She shifted her fingers inside and swept pulsing heat, heavy as an alloy. Dizzying along with most terrifying. He murmured, shuddering like an infant foal

as I stroked him, breathing throughout his tongue.

‘We're not lifeless, not despite! All the corresponding and all, we ought to accept out of here before the Ministry-’ embodiment flashed on his face as I articulated some soft words.

She would never-ever have been so scared.

Simply milliseconds, already, like- I could finish, he abruptly drew me away from the edge of the obscurations, twirling me effortlessly so that my rump was strong upon the masonry surface,

and his rear was to me as he faced away into the lane.

Never earlier in all me at moment being of fourteen years. 'FUCK THE ALL THE WETNESS YOU CAN OUT OF ME…' she had sighed.

His arms spread wider than my legs, protectively, in front of me. I saw under his arm two dark configurations separate themselves from the shadow.

The opening was plush, the description only the most prosperous might produce. Yet they remained empty containers on the bureau and worn buds

on the nightstand, flagged in the smelly scent of grief.

‘Greetings, gentlemen, ‘Marcel’s speech was quiet and comfortable, on the surface. ‘I don't think I'll be lacking your services now. I would relish it very much, however, if you would give my thanks to your masters.’

The girl took solace in perceiving this gentleman she disliked so well-to-do furthermore so wholly alone. She followed him within the windowpane as he hung up his dress cape, propped a battered tricorn on a bare carafe.

‘Shall we take this communication to a more proper venue?’ A creamy voice murmured imminently.

Deciding to change herself she could do that. That she remained stimulating and intelligent as iron.

‘I don't understand that will be important. ‘Marcel’s voice was more troublesome promptly.

Landed on the rooftop counterpart, she glanced down on the borough of the grave of Gods; on blood-spotted cobbles and underground burrows and towering temples of shimmering bone.

‘I don't understand that will be important. ‘Marcel’s voice was more laborious now.

The ribs piercing the sky above us, intertwined waterways streaming out from the winding backbone.

‘I understand your directions, Fredric.

I have not burst into any rules, by having her do this- and being what she is.’

‘Fredric simply expected to point out the nearness of the sun,’ the other adumbration said in a comforting resonance.

Long adumbrations displaying the packed sidewalks as the secondary sun turned dimmer still—the primary sun continued to disappear, omitting their third, silent red sibling to attain to watch within the hazards of the night.

Some girls have obtained both veiled evil faces, within silvery hoary masks like the clouds above them, the young girl's faces also hooded with blood-red cloaks yet showing the front of their naked young little bodies, around them, that reached to the ground and billowed in the hurricane, the caps blowing around showing their bodies even more as they fluttered in the wind.

‘Let us find some better cover.’

Oh, if only it were true twilight.

If it continued, he would not heed her.

She was not convinced she required him to accompany her in this.

Stretching out with talented fingers, she stretched the darkness to her.

Weaving and twisting the black gossamer threads until they flowed across her shoulders like a cloak.

She disappeared from the world’s viewpoint, converted almost crystalline, like a blemish on a representation of the

borough’s horizon. Bouncing beyond the void to his windowsill, she dragged herself up upon the edge.

‘I'll be immediately following you, ‘Marcel said dryly. ‘Bell, why don't you go back to the plaza and savor the celebration, of me becoming one of them a girl of the Fallen?’

Furthermore, speedily unfastening the glass, she shifted through to the opening exceeding, inaudible as the feline within, made of darkness track following.

Launching a dagger of her region, she recuperated more onerously,

shivering about thick and thin. Hunched unnoticed in a veer, thongs flapping like butterfly wings upon her body, she saw him stuffing a goblet with trembling fingers.

‘No, return the girl,’ the preeminent adumbration said, somehow adding a sneer into his disclosure.

She was gasping too loudly, her schoolings all a-tumble in her crest. Although he was too paralyzed to regard, dropped someplace in the identified creaks of a thousand elongated collars, a thousand couples of toes swinging dancing, and singing to the sinister Fallen verses.

‘I don't believe so.’ The mask of them like civility disappeared, and the love came back of them and with me to them, I was in sisterhood.

Marcel’s voice was smooth and freezing, as the world I was in was becoming around me as if frosted after the wicked storm. His weight shifted minutely, and I could see that he was proving to fight.

Her knuckles became white on the blade’s handhold as she listened from the shadow.

I could not exhale. I could not articulate words. I did not want this to create my end.

‘Never…’ I said the word.

‘Sh-h,’ he murmured, only for me.

‘Fredric,’ the secondary, more moderate shadow alerted.

He cried as he absorbed from the vessel, mishandling with cufflinks on ruffled covers, all fingers and perspiration, and shivers.

Tugging his coverings off, he hobbled opposite the committees and dropped onto the bench. Presently she and he now, an inspiration for inhalation.

At the end of his, she could no longer discriminate.

‘Not here.’ He returned to Marcel. ‘Aron would utterly like to converse with you repeatedly if you have selected not to push our grasp following all.’

The stillness was unacceptable, perspiration drenching her through as the twilight quivered vibrated.

Memorizing who she was, what this gentleman ought to take, all that would explain if she abandoned. Moreover, steeling herself, she launched

off her cloak of obscurations and marched out to meet him.

‘Unquestionably,’ Marcel admitted.

‘All the equivalents including all, the girl goes openly scot-free.’

‘I'm nervous that's not plausible,’ the friendly obscuration said regretfully.

‘We do have edicts to perform.’

He gulped, commencing as a young two-year-old as she wandered toward the red sunshine just now displaying a harlequin’s smirk in place of her own.

‘Then I'm nervous that I'll be unable to acquire Aron's bidding, Eamettri.’

'You just did he said.'

‘All was fine,’ Fredric muttered.

She had never observed anyone so afraid, before becoming one of the Fallen.

My eyes were accommodating to the profound shade, furthermore, I could discern that Fredric was huge, outlandish, and three-dimensional within the arms, so it was not a dream.

His dimension suggested I was going to be just like Lily and Emmah, as I know I was becoming.

And that is most terrifying to me, that will be more than staying, analysis offensive strategies likewise somatic for everything that I need to keep within my mind surely.

(Back)

Nevaeh- 'All my friends are either in young kids Jail or in hell!' Said Nevaeh to herself, just before the last days of her life, or the one I remember, when I thought I died? I do not remember it may be over the aphasia.

'Nevaeh is the only girl that I know that would as a young teen when she was on trial ask to approach the bench in court and do so and ask the judge to suck a fart out of her ass.' Said Hope.

(6 months later)

I scream to all in the mental school, 'oh God take me to pound town!' My day started like any other in my childhood around the time after my 14th birthday, and even some years back before that even if I think hard enough about this. Sucking my dildo for practice, and eating my girl-comings of as I always did before school after I heard about

others in my Gym class talking about doing this, even in the nut home when I was lost thinking I was in a new world not my own and even as Naddalin, noting changed my sex drive of being naked and of wanting Lily and Chiaz to feel me, and wanting both were making me more than crazy as I was 14 to the age of 18 until I was safe and rehabilitated, so they say I was, even as a child wanting love is what made me go mad- I was even asking if I was ever dead? So, I was never dead, it was Naddalin that passed, not me, I still am Nevaeh and well always be, and I always have my fantasies and my escaping stories of being out of my head

in pain and hurt. I still had moments where I was lost time from time, in deep thoughts.

I remember the one time when I ran out of my home too and I was on the swing with him, and we kissed long and slow for the first time, it is December 5 and freezing outside at 3:33 am yet I have in his lap and hugged around his warm body- like a child. I remember we rain both hands and hand hot with young concupiscence of too the great outdoors of miles and miles of fields oh it can be surprisingly sensual, gratefulness in role to romantic elements like there was much white shimmering lights at night all

around my home- that I placed for the upcoming Christmas, from the trees to the bushes to the home cover in white lights, it was memories that could never be lost or the scent of pine evergreens carried away from the tree farms always away by a light breeze. I remember saying if you are scared to go to church, 'do you eat girl come?' 'M-hmm!' 'Do you eat boy come?' 'M-hmm,' and we held each other tighter, in the genitalia of magnetism and appetite concerning courtship.

Taking it out of the house, and all the old fragmentary feeble-minded ways of my caretaker, I remember many nights

like that now that was lost to my sickness of trauma to my mind as a child, the porch swing, the light covered wishing well twinkling softly, the flickering path lights, the snowflakes, the picnic blanket on the steeps, the hot drinks, the experience outdoor activities- after being locked up for years, was all I had to keep going, in the nuts school for girls like me, that go meatal, yet I never stopped writing down my stories, as they would come back to me, notebook after notebook, it was like I was lost in illusory patterns of anterograde amnesia, yet deep in playing the part of a 'Winged

Goddess,' for other girls like me, as if I was their angel and they were mine.

Though I know it was all real, I just do, I have seen all of them in my life before, this was just part of my life, not a dream, even if I have been told it was by experts. I have a breakdown, start to cry, and then to calm myself, I think of the remembrances of the past, I remember looking at him without fear of prying eyes, always in the back of my mind having my neighbors having a view into my yard, and even my mind until it drove me bonkers.

Looking back on it all now- I thought we would have his and hers

matching caskets- with my lover - for life, after the I do's, turns out I had some of that yet not all, I even had a baby, from this that was taken by him, or so they say yet, I do not trust what they say to me when I a naked getting bathed by their mean hands and comments of thinking I am braindead too.

-And-

Then, I start to think about the true past, the one that is coming back to me, and I cherished moments like this at becoming a woman, I love pulling out and dumping all my cream, all over him, and 'it' ever-so lying back towards his bellybutton- I cover it with my hot stick

thick gluey girly love; starting in are teen years I remember, how cute we were just masturbating together- eyes locked in love, and the moment of feeling in love with each other.

Thinking back…

(Back)

Nevaeh- It is in 1999. Were in a RESTAURANT called Le Cœur de Paradis. Nevaeh and WILLARD AKA Grandpa Amsel are seated at a dining table.

Nevaeh, Will Frieda be joining us after dinner? she asked. WILLARD was saying It was a long flight. She will see you tomorrow. Nevaeh-, your stepdaddy

and I have decided it would be in your best interests if we no longer fund this…life of yours. Here in this city.

I remember that Nevaeh said the word '…Papa…?' Looking up at him, who was always grouchy. WILLARD, the mesmerism you wrote about, is just down the way from here.

Our church does not approve. Nevaeh said. 'It's Hypnotism, I just know it, yet she was only 4 years old.' Saying this in mindless chatting, or so it was perceived.

She is helping me, Papa. She is helping so much… you need to be nicer to

her. He said, standing up for me. WILLARD said nonetheless... we are cutting you off. With love, you are not giving to this child at this moment that loves you without fail.

(DOCTOR LORENZO rushes into the room, to see you Nevaeh to meet and greet us.) Hypnotism is what they are doing to be, she whispered in the doctor's ear. DOCTOR LORENZO is now sitting next to young Nevaeh at this moment. ‘I’m so sorry I’m late. Dog bathing crises at home, nice to see you again Nevaeh.’

WILLARD, said I see, and started digging the dirt from under his

fingernails, and then started to rip them up using his teeth.

Doctor Lorenzo- I was just telling Nevaeh- we have found it best to restrict our financial help towards her. Then at that moment, DOCTOR LORENZO Restrict. By how much?

(WILLARD, HE does not answer. Neither does Nevaeh.) I see he said over. Then he said her stepdaddy believes it will encourage her to find a job, Mr. Black. Or a husband, she always did have a boyhood crush- on Chiaz Naztherth.

Nevaeh said at that moment at that time, ‘I’m…not feeling well.’

(SHE stands feeling queasy, and kisses WILLARD’s cheek.)

Nevaeh- I will see you tomorrow, Papa, ‘I still love you.’ Goodnight, Doctor Lorenzo.

(SHE EXITS FROM THE ROOM SWIFTLY.)

Doctor Lorenzo said at that moment, she is fitting in well here, she is doing simply fine.

WILLARD then said, well to all here I apologize- so very much, if the sudden loss of Nevaeh's three days a week might initially set you back financially, Doctor.

DOCTOR LORENZO I will get by even if I am not paid for this. I find it interesting you chose to give Nevaeh up instead of keeping her with you- this news here, is saying you have the right to have her at any time now, she needs to be with others her age, and you have a home for her like type- yes? Now, in a public space, she is going to melt down. To guarantee against a scene, I imagine, she would not be harmful to others. Though I also imagine you were at one time quite used to public scenes, she has made great signs of progress.

WILLARD, said I am not sure if I get your drift, Doctor. But this place is

not home for her, from what I have been hearing. And I do not care if this man is sitting here now, I find them to be repulsive, to children.

DOCTOR LORENZO Your wife…?

Nevaeh’s Pap said she is a fine woman. A Christian woman.

DOCTOR LORENZO said, yes, that I am sure of. I have written to your numerous times about her, yet you have not given any answers. Information I might need for Nevaeh's therapy, of the disturbances to her young life. You never respond to my 49 notes.

‘I never saw her lay a hand on Nevaeh!’ The grandpa said.

(Yet deep in the child's mind the doctor could feel all the many beatings.)

Yes, she was nervous, all the time, that is just the way she is and acts. She could be a peculiar young woman. Difficult sometimes. But a stepdaddy... a or a granddaddy could never harm a sweet child, as I have never been with her. The question was not about you saying more about your wife and doing what was asked of you to do by this woman.

DOCTOR LORENZO- Do you believe Nevaeh- shattered her larynx? Dislocated her shoulder?

WILLARD said Nevaeh- had many falls as a girl, she was slow and clumsy.

DOCTOR LORENZO You were witness to these falls, and so are the many children you oversee and by court order, I can have all those kids testify?

WILLARD said Masel would tell me… that she would… (never mind.)

DOCTOR LORENZO was questioning him, she said Nevaeh- almost suffocated in the wheat bin in the barn behind your home, is this true, and you

have made her sleep there on cold nights for punishments.

DOCTOR WILUBR (Continued, in her typed reports, given in readback) You found her a two-day letter from what the child said. How do you think she got in there, or do you not remember, yet you want her back? We ask why…?

WILLARD, it was the town bully is a story she has made up her mind. It is never her fault, she is always the bad girl, she cannot see that she needs to stop blaming others for her issues, and disabilities.

‘This child has no know disabilities from my reports of examinations.’

He said, if you say so, yet this is what I pay for…

Nevaeh said you and Masel put her there… no, that would be her guardian that did that… not us. Hope makes up to be monsters, also to this child too, and who is to say all this is not just more brainwashing from a simple child, by a woman that is more dimwitted than the child she is caring for.

‘Yet again this child is not simple.’

DOCTOR LORENZO Your wife was a schizophrenic. She was diagnosed at the Mayo Clinic. But she never returned for treatment when she was 75.

WILLARD said she did not want to go back with us even when this woman was doing this with her. She said all the doctors would do was stare at her, and did nothing to help, do you believe that also from a child?

DOCTOR LORENZO And yet you allowed this woman, this is so sick... this woman you knew to be dangerously mentally unbalanced... you allowed her to take care of your grandchild?

WILLARD, I did not do anything- she is... crazy all in our church... would say so.

DOCTOR LORENZO, said you would leave her alone every day to be tortured, by your grandkids and wife. To be struck and to be burnt. To be abused sexually by you and your kids, and the kids you keep within your home to foster.

WILLARD, it was different- a different time- I had no choice- and this was more with her sisters Naddalin than it was with Nevaeh. Yet she remembers as if it was her.

DOCTOR LORENZO You had a choice, Mr. with both girls, and all the kids under your care! TWO ROADS, to go down, ONE has FACTS AND ONE LIES. IGNORE WHAT'S IN FRONT OF YOU OR OPEN YOUR EYES TO THE TRUTH!

'Odd she said the same things to us.'

'TWO ROADS ONE EASY, ONE HARD.'

GUESS WHICH ONE ALLOWS COMPLETE DISREGARD OF THE TRUTH? Well not see the truth of everything.

DOCTOR LORENZO, (SHE throws her napkin on the table and goes to leave, then stops.)

I have no problem treating Nevaeh- for free, sir. And she is getting better. Yet therefore I do not want you around her. And I do not doubt that someday she will be completely well if you all stay away.

But at present she is not capable of holding down a regular job, when she ends school, even now she has just started and is regressing over pain, hurt, and distrust, overall, this is what you have put her through. I will not see this girl, so damaged by your wife, further abused by

the misused machinations to your kids, and was dealing them to others in your communities.

(WILLARD bows his head, not looking at HER. He nods, so that is how it all seems for a child that is crazy, just like the other one rest in peace.) He makes the catholic cross over his head and chest.

DOCTOR LORENZO do not mock God, before me, sir. Like, why is this child would be thinking about a chinse finger trap on to boy’s private, you know… unless she has seen it take place as she said she did or heard it from you all.

Ture, we did this to two other boys that had homoerotic unholy thoughts about each other.

Interval:

Your Cute, You're Cuter

Just back before, the highest power of all Lords of this time became Amsel’s.

Ansley froze everything within him stilling. Welford seemed to sink farther into the feather pillows. you would not give me the bloody reins, he went on. you were not going fast enough. I wanted to go faster. I told you to give me the bloody reins. But no. You have always been so damned responsible.

You said we would kill ourselves. Welford released a strangled sob. I bloody well have. Staring at him, Ansley shook his head. I was driving us' not fast enough

to suit me. I grabbed the reins... shoved you off.

Ansley fought to remember, but it was all a blur, the events encased in a fog of liquor.

I lost my balance, Welford continued. fell forward. I still remember the terror of it, the agony ...and then nothing. I was so grateful for nothing.

Ansley felt as though he had been bludgeoned. He thought he should have felt immense relief but all he felt was betrayed. All these years, I was shackled to guilt. as well as you should be. If only you had gone faster.

Wilford, surely this is your fever talking, Jannie said softly. none of this can be true. You could not be that cruel. I am on fire, but I am lucid. He would not give me the reins, so I snatched them away.

He sounded like a petulant child who was being denied his favorite sweet.

His shoulders shook as he began coughing. Jannie hurried over, put her arm around him, and lifted him until the spasms stopped. Then she gave him a drink of water and gently laid him back down.

He rolled his head to look at Ansley again. please.

My jewels. Bring them to me.

Jannie patted a damp cloth over his brow. What sort of jewels are they that are so important to you? they are my children.

Standing at the window, unconsciously rubbing her hand over her swollen abdomen, Jannie gazed out on the drive where Ansley's coach waited. Still stunned by Welford's revelation, she watched in a detached manner as Ansley assisted a girl to the ground. From this distance, she appeared close to Jannie's age. She was fair. blond-haired Person beneath the hat, Jannie thought.

Her heart constricted painfully as Ansley lifted out a young girl, and then another even smaller. She did not know why she expected them to be older, so much older. Born years before, she and Welford married. Surely it was only the distance separating her from them that made them look so small and young.

Dr. Roberts was excited next. The one who had seen her after she fainted at Ansley's ball. He could save Welford. They were due a miracle. But then she thought of the child she now carried. Another miracle. How many were one family allowed?

She moved to stand by the foot of the bed, her shoulders back, her hands clasped tightly and perched on her stomach, her chin held high. She knew her duty. She would be an accommodating host.

Do you hate me? Welford asked.

With her eyes on the door, she ignored his question and asked one of her own, they are quite young. The girls. What are their names?

Mary and Elizabeth. I named them after Henry the

VIII's daughters. When I married you, you became Jannie Demure, his only true love, if history is to be believed.

His words made no sense. They were little more than gibberish. When did you name them? she asked.

His chuckle was brief, too much effort. when they were born. When do you think?

When were they born? It sounded like another girl's voice asking the question with no emotion whatsoever. A steady cadence.

The patter of footsteps in the hallway kept him silent. Or he had never

intended to answer at all. Jannie took a deep breath to steady her nerves and wondered distractedly if this was how Anne Boleyn dreaded the coming moments as she was led to her execution. She felt as though the ax were coming down on all she had ever believed about her marriage.

Her first thought upon gazing at the girl who came through the door with Ansley was that her features were quite plain. She was the sort who would be unnoticed in a group of women. Then Jannie chastised herself for so ungracious a thought. Obviously, on some level, she appealed to Welford. Her dark blue

traveling dress showed that she was either of a high station or she had a benefactor who paid a pretty penny for her clothing. If that benefactor stayed in Welford, Jannie did not wish to know it.

Ansley guided the girl to Jannie. Lady Welford, allow me to introduce Ms. Madeline Black.

The girl took a deep curtsy. my woman. Her voice was soft, cultured.

He drew back and held her gaze. I will swim at night, so I will be too tired to do the wicked things I would dearly love to do to you.

What is the longest you have ever stayed with one girl? never compare yourself to other women.

What if I appeal to you only because I am a challenge? If I am yours, you may very well grow tired of me. never. you cannot know that for sure.

What I know is that I have never felt for any girl what I have felt for you. I do not know how many ways I can say it or show you. Sometimes, Jannie, you must simply have faith.

Have faith. Have faith that he will not hurt her. Have faith that he would not

cast her aside once he had her. Have faith that he absolutely loved her.

She hated the doubts that plagued her as the days and nights slipped by.

Every afternoon, he joined her in the garden for a walk. Sometimes they would stroll for more than an hour, talking, enjoying the flowers.

Often, he would read to her in the garden. At night, they would watch the stars.

She had the opportunity to see him as he tended to the business of his estate and other properties. He was firm

when he needed to be. It was obvious that those with whom he dealt respected him and valued his opinion.

She had always heard that he had inherited his wealth. While that was no doubt true, it was obvious to her that he took great pains to look after what had been entrusted to him. When troubles arose, he would discuss them with her, as though her opinion had value. He made her feel appreciated in so many ways.

And always, always, he slept with her, held her through the night.

Miss Black, my husband, wishes to have a moment with you. I will leave you in privacy.

She was at the door when the girl exclaimed, on, Wally! and the girl's Black-haired, Black-eyed, his eyes were racing past her crying, papa! Papa!

She stepped into the hallway, aware of Ansley behind her. She greeted the physician, forcing words through a throat that refused to work properly. We shall give them a few moments, she said to the doctor, and then you may examine the marquees. If you are so kind as to excuse me, I am in dire need of some air. of course, my woman.

She could barely see the stairs through the tears that had gathered. She felt Ansley wrapping his hand around her arm. careful, he cautioned.

She gave him leave to guide her down the stairs and escort her into the garden. She broke free of his hold as soon as she was on a familiar path. How long have you known about his jewels?

He hesitated before saying somberly if they had been with him.

She refused to ask exactly how long that was, but she was not yet ready to stop tormenting herself completely. the smallest girl. How old is she? Jannie' I can

guess but I'd know for sure. She recently turned three. If I had not lost my first child, he' or she' would be a little over three now. So, he saw that girl while I was with the child. Jannie, do not torment yourself. was he with Ms. Black the night of the accident? Jannie, nothing is to be gained'

She spun around to confront him. She could see the agony of the truth on his face, in his eyes. But she had to hear the words. was ...he?

He hesitated and the muscle in his cheek ticked before he replied, yes.

She dug her fingernails into her palms, needing discomfort so she could force back the tears. so, you were both not only drinking and gambling' as you told me but fornicating as well, yes.

I thought he loved me. Or at least had a care for me. She wound her arms around her chest. on, it hurts so bad.

He reached for her, and she stepped back.

Do not touch me. You knew. You knew he did not honor his vows. Why did you not tell me?

No good would have come off you knew the truth. It would have only made you miserable.

He shrugged. and he could no longer be unfaithful. He does love you, Jannie.

But not enough. And you, by holding silent, condoned his actions. My God, with your reputation with the women, you no doubt celebrated his poor behavior. Women are nothing to you. That is not true. You'

I do not wish to hear it. Your excuses, your poetic words, your sweet gestures. They are all designed with one

goal in mind. I fell for them. I allowed you and my husband to convince me that a situation existed where vows mattered not at all. Everything, everything was a lie.

She walked away from him, needing time alone. He must have sensed what she needed because he did not follow.

She retreated to the bench where she had wept so often after Welford's accident. Before she wept for all he lost, all the dreams shattered by the accident. Now she wept because he had betrayed her and their vows. With Ansley's help, he convinced her to betray herself and her

vows. Vows that she now understood had only ever meant anything to her.

It hurt. It hurt so badly. More so because Ansley had been complicated in the deceptions. She had trusted him with her body, her dreams, and a part of her heart. And he had known, always known, that everything she treasured was a lie.

Dr. Roberts had examined Welford and declared him beyond help. Ansley had arranged for him to return home then. Welford's physician would be seeing to his remaining needs.

Despite Welford's revelations that afternoon, Ansley's chest ached as he

leaned against the bedpost and studied his sleeping friend. He had told Jannie that he could keep vigil for a while to give her a bit of a reprieve. Ms. Black was putting the girls to bed.

Jannie had strolled through the garden for more than an hour. Ansley had wanted to stay with her, but he sensed that she wanted to be as far from him as possible. Discovering that Welford had a lover was a horrible blow. He had seen the devastation on her face when he revealed what the jewels were. Then he had seen the stoicism with which she greeted the girl. Her courage, her

strength, her determination never in his life had he admired a girl more.

Jannie was correct. With his silence, he had condoned Welford's actions all those years ago, why had he not beaten him to a pulp back then? Why had he not fought to make him realize that his greatest treasure was his wife?

Welford's eyes fluttered open, and Ansley said, you lied. Welford stared at him. About the reins. Taking them from me.

No. Why would you let me believe all these years that my reckless handling of horses resulted in the accident?

Because, my friend, guilt is an unbelievably valuable currency, and I needed to ensure you looked over my jewels. I would have watched over them regardless, he said. I had to ensure it, old boy.

He did not want to broach the subject, it was none of his concern, but suspicions lurked, and he was disappointed enough with Welford at that moment to pry. The girls knew who you were. naturally. how? When did you see them?

Welford rolled his head to the side, gazed toward the windows, and

Ansley wondered if he sought to escape. When, Welford?

When I would go to Harrogate for the waters. Maddie and the girls would meet me there. Jannie deserved much better. and now she will have it. I will not be in the way.

Ansley felt as though he had been bludgeoned. All the fury dissipated. He moved closer so his friend could see the earnestness in his eyes. demit, Welford, I do not want her, not like this. For all your faults, I have always loved you as a brother.

You were always the better man. I thought if I were in your company often enough that you would rub off on me. I pray to God that I did not rub off on you. fight this thing, blast you. You can defeat it.

Welford shook his head. no, I cannot. He motioned Ansley nearer. see after Jannie and the child. It will be difficult for them. And promise me that you will take care of my jewels. See that they are supported. Find them suitable husbands. you are a manipulator to the end, aren't you?

Welford gave him a weary smile. I shall take that as your assent.

At that moment, Welford appeared at peace as he drifted off to sleep. Ansley cursed him to perdition, but he knew he would fulfill these latest requests.

Jannie sat in a chair beside the bed, her hand curled around one of Welford's. He was feverish, muttering in his sleep. Now and then he would mumble Maddie. Or Elizabeth. Or Mary.

She despised the way that she waited for him to utter her name. It was only one syllable, for Christ's sake. It needed only one movement of his jaw. She could not help but believe that her entire marriage had been a farce. Her

entire life. She wanted to rail against him, pound her fists into his chest; she wanted him to live so she could reconcile her emotions, so she could discover why she had not been enough.

Despite it all, she did not wish death upon him. She knew now that he was not hers. He never had been. How could she have been such a fool?

The babe rolled from one side of her stomach to another, as though sensing her stress and striving to bring her comfort. He was such an active bugger. He would be active, like his father. Now he would grow up knowing no father. Not the one who had intended

to claim him or the one who had given him life.

I want to thank you for your kindness to me and my girls, Ms. Black said.

Jannie glanced over to the other side of the bed, where the girl was sitting on its edge, gently mopping Welford's brow.

Not all wives would be as accepting of a lover, she continued. He asked for you, Jannie said with as little emotion as she could muster. I must assume he cares for you.

I met him in a bookshop. The book I wanted was on a shelf I could not reach, so he retrieved it for me. Our hands touched, and it fostered a spark between us that I cannot explain. We walked to a nearby park and talked for hours.

Jannie did not want to hear this, she did not care, and yet she was morbidly interested. Why not dig the knife more deeply into her heart? What did you talk of? She asked.

Ms. Black released a small laugh. I cannot remember now. We always had something to talk about. I should not say,

but ...I visited here while you were away on holiday. The girls and me.

Jannie did not want to contemplate that he had arranged her leaving for Blackmon to allow being with Ms. Black. But all his actions were suspect now. Still, she heard herself say, 'I'm glad.'

Part:

Ms. Black looked at her, her eyes blinking in confusion.

I would not have wanted him to be lonely while I was gone, Jannie explained. -Especially as now he has not much more time to be here.

-He always spoke so highly of you. I thought I should have been jealous that he had such deep feelings for you as well. But he would not have tolerated that. The jealousy. I knew I would like you before I met you. Under other circumstances we would have been friends. Or not. My father was a clergyman. He did not approve of my choices. I have not seen him in years. He does not even know he has granddaughters.

So, many choices led to such sadness. Jannie wondered if they were all worth it. Welford had been an adulterer, and he made an adulterer of hers. Yet as

the babe kicked once more, she knew she could not regret her sins.

She had made the decision expecting Welford to live to a ripe old age. He had made his proposal expecting the same.

Welford opened his eyes and smiled softly at her. Jannie.

At last, her name on his lips. She squeezed his hand. Would you like some water?

No. He rolled his head to the side and smiled lovingly at Ms. Black. With so little effort, he communicated so much, and Jannie wondered if she had ever

really known him. I need a private moment with my wife. of course, my darling. Ms. Black kissed him on the cheek before leaving the room.do you hate me so very much? he asked when she was gone.

Slowly, she shook her head, knowing she should fight back the tears but suspecting they were more honest than any words she could speak. why, Welford, why? We cannot control our hearts, Jannie. But we can control our actions. She gave her head a brisk shake. my apologies. I do not wish to torment you.

Strange, he rasped. I felt so guilty because I had children and you did not. I thought if I could arrange for you to have a child, then …the guilt would ease. Yet instead, I leave you to raise it on your own. Even when I strive to be thoughtful, I am a complete cad. She had no response.

I was an unfaithful bastard, he continued. I love Madeline, but she is a commoner. I needed your dowry, and I enjoyed your company. It shames me to say it ...but I did not begin to love you until after the accident. Your loyalty and faith humbled me. You made me a better man than I was, made me wish I had been

a better man before. Ansley is that better man. He always has been.

She wrapped both her hands around him and held his gaze. despite all the revelations that have come about today ...I still love you.

He closed his eyes with a sigh. then I shall die a most fortunate man.

Death came in the hushed stillness of dawn.

With hardly a word spoken, they journeyed to Rockville where Welford was to be laid to rest. While Ansley had a servant escort Ms. Black and her girls to their Rockville home, he accompanied

Jannie to Welford's residence. Once there, mourning cards were sent out, and soon the women of society descended like ravenous ravens to flutter around Jannie. He knew they sought only to comfort her, but it was a task he would have preferred had been reserved for himself.

But since their encounter in the garden, she had not spoken to him except when necessary. She was incredibly formal, unnaturally stoic. He had heard Miss Black sobbing uncontrollably after Welford's passing but had yet to see Jannie shed a tear. And that worried him.

Still, Ansley admired Jannie's dedication to ensuring that Welford's

funeral was one befitting his title and station. The glass-sided hearse and four, carrying the mahogany casket, traveled slowly through the people-lined streets on its way to St. Paul's, where Welford would be entombed. Welford's riderless horse plodded along behind it. With shutters drawn, a dozen black carriages that housed the male members of the family and close friends followed. Black ostrich plumes fluttered in the slight breeze.

Jannie was relieved to see the Duchess of Ansley step forward. Although she had relinquished the title when she married Lenny, she was still discussed as such and shown the deference that came

with holding the title for so long. I believe, the duchess said, that what Lady Welford needs is to do what is best for her. She also needs rest. Surely it is past time for all you dear women to take your leave.

She began ushering them from the room, but each circled back to give Jannie one last message of condolence and reassurance that they could be called upon if needed. In the entry hallway, they were soon joined by their husbands. Then finally, at last, silence.

Jannie saw the shoes first, black, and polished to a shine.

Slowly, her gaze traveled over the black trousers, the black waistcoat and jacket, until it settled on green eyes. a bloody awful day, Ansley said.

She drew comfort from the words, words she had wanted to say. yes. My mother, Lenny, and I will stay here through the night in case there is anything you need.

that is not necessary. I shall be alone in all the days to come. I might as well begin getting used to it. not tonight. You need to eat, Jannie. I have no appetite. the babe does.

She placed her hand against her side. People are gossiping. They do not believe it is his.

And now he is not here to convince them. Bad timing, that.

It does not matter what others think or believe. It only matters what you want. Only she did not know.

He had food brought to her on a tray. While she ate, he told her about the grandeur of the funeral procession, all the people lining the streets. Welford had gone out in style. She thought he would be pleased. Despite all the revelations at

the end of his life, she had cared for him too long not to do right by him in the end.

Part:

After she had eaten as much as she could stomach, she allowed the duchess to escort her to her bedchamber, where a bath was prepared. She wanted to be alone, but the duchess still been, talking constantly about nonsensical things as though she felt a need to fill the hovering silence.

Once she was in her nightdress, Jannie strolled to the nursery that she had begun furnishing for the first time she

was with a child. Sitting in the rocker, she was finally, finally, alone with her sorrow.

In the library, Ansley looked up as his mother walked into the room and went to the table holding several decanters. She poured herself a brandy and sat in a chair across from him, one beside Lenny, who was keeping Ansley company' even if it entailed little more than drinking with him. How is she? He asked.

I am most worried about her. She is presently sitting in the nursery and rocking. But all afternoon and evening, she does not weep nor wail. It is not natural. It cannot be healthy for the child.

His stomach clenched. He could not bear the thought of Jannie going through another loss such as that. Would she even survive it? He stood. I will speak to her.

He took two steps before his mother spoke up again. Ansley?

Stopping, he glanced back at her. He knew the sorrow on her face had nothing to do with the mourning of Welford. Have you considered, my son, that you should marry the girl?

Far too many times to count.

It is customary for a wife to mourn for two years, he reminded her.

A year would suffice, but in this instance ...she carries your child, Ansley. Marry her and claim it.

The terms of our arrangement were that this child would be Jannie's and Welford's; forgive my indelicacy but he is dead.

it does not change the fact that he boasted to all of Rockville that he sired this child. His passing complicated matters. I cannot deny that. But it does not relieve me of my promise not to claim this child. must you be so blasted noble? It grows wearisome.

I took everything from him, Mother. I will not take what was to be his child. Besides, I doubt Jannie would have me. She never struck me as a fool.

He almost smiled at the clipped edge that went with her words. In her eyes, her sons could do no wrong. He wondered if Jannie would feel the same about hers. He suspected she would. With only a nod, he left his mother then, knowing she would not follow.

It was strange to walk through the somber residence, to compare it with the joviality that abounded at Herndon Hall the last time he was there for the fox hunt. Death brought a pall over

everything. It did not help matters that none of the clocks released a single tick or tock' having been stopped at the hour of Welford's passing' and all the mirrors were draped in black crepe. He made his way up the stairs to the nursery.

At the door, he hesitated. It was closed. He should have knocked, but if he announced himself, she might not invite him in. With a deep sigh, he opened the door. The room was dark, save for a single lamp that burned low. He heard the heartrending weeping, and it took him a moment to find her. She was sitting on the floor, pressed in a distant corner, her face buried in her hands, her rounded

shoulders shaking with the force of her sobs. His courageous Jannie, alone with her sorrow. She would not succumb to his mother. But at least she could grieve in private.

He considered leaving, but he could no more abandon her now than he could cease to breathe. Quietly, he moved over to her and crouched, his knees popping to announce his arrival.

As though only just noticing his presence, she began to swipe at her cheeks. please go away... Ansley.

He grabbed her wrists to still her actions, and she jerked free. Please leave

me in peace. are you in peace, Jannie? It hardly sounds like it. I know you mourn him'

I mourn so much more than his passing. It was all a lie. He made a mockery of our life here. He loved someone else. He loved you.

He did not! And you knew! She slammed her balled fist into his shoulder. you knew! I thought ...I thought you had a care for me.

I do have a care for you. I love you, but now was not the time to tell her the truth of those words. No, you do not. You would not have kept his secrets from

me. The guilt over what we did gnaw at me. As much as I wanted this child, I betrayed everything I held dear. It was so easy for the two of you because you place no value on loyalty, on vows. I thought I knew you, but the man I knew would not have condoned what Welford did. You cut off the same cloth. Please leave me. I do not like him. I would never betray you. you already have. She hit him again.

-And again-

His heart died a bit with each blow. He had never meant to bring her this pain' even as he'd known when the proposition was first made that she would have to betray herself to embrace it.

He wrapped his arms around her to stop her flailing and rocked her. easy, Jannie, easy, sweetheart. You do not want to hurt the child.

Her sobs broke free, racking her body. I wish I had said no, Jannie. I swear to you, I wish I had. I hurt so bad, Ansley. I know. Why did he have to leave me now?

And he knew despite the betrayals, she still loved Welford. It is all right, Jannie. It will be all right.

He did not know how the bloody hell it would be, but he would find a way.

He hated painting. It was delicate and girly. Way too famine for her taste but it was what she did.

She was a natural painter, not one of those sensitive fainters to fall first sign of distress but a fainter still. It could have been worse, He had to concede, at least she was not a poker.

'Pay up, told you she would wake up.'

'She shells like a roast.' she knew those voices.

'Unfortunate thing.' The second one was unable to leave everything well enough alone. 'Delicate thing, isn’t she?'

Someone snorted. He groans, opening one eye and shutting it. Too much light. What she saw was a mage light hovering above her head on the ceiling. 'Ack!' He rolled away from the light. Her body creaked. 'Which one of you heifers called me delicate.' She rasped.

'Honor did.' That was Lily talking, giggling. She wanted to giggle at herself, she had not been sure she would see either of them again. Now that she was hearing their voices it hit hard how much she had missed them.

'Tell her...to go jump in a lake.'

'Only if you come with me.' Honor spoke for herself. 'Heely, you shell like we could stick you on a table. I'm not exactly a fan of smoked foods either.'

He grimaced, opening her eyes again. They focused quickly, targeting the tall blonde woman standing overhead with the challenging blue eyes. 'I try.' Lily stood beside her mate smiling broadly, practically bouncing. Someone was missing.

'Where is his Highness?' he asked. Where was Sh-h?

'In a meeting with some of the Elders. He has not left your side until

now. He was confident that you wouldn't wake up until later today.' and it was just her luck to prove him wrong.

'Mara is here?' He sat up then. Where exactly had Sh-h taken them?

'Calm down Heely, you’re still in Median, Mara came to visit for a while. Before all this happens.' Lily told her. 'She wants to know what happened-'

The mood in the room changed from a happy reunion to somber and bleak. 'The city was burning.' That was all she knew. There was no way she could produce it.

'We are known.' Lily looked away. 'And now it is not and that is all that should matter for the moment.' He was impressed by her optimism. She could not do it, that did not particularly matter. Why was the Median burning in the first place?

'Come on Heely, Sh-h gave us orders not to let you out of our sights until he comes back.'

'Are you going to listen to him?' He raised a brow at the tall unruly blond-haired woman.

'Depends on if you are going to tell us how in the seven hells you were

kidnapped.' Honor told her to come forward. 'What happened to you? Why are you not in Kraal with Arcane? What took you two so long to get back, why does Sh-h have that thing around his neck-' Lily put a hand on her mate's mouth.

'We want all the details to be what she means.'

He regarded her two friends with an assessing stare. They did not budge. 'I might tell you if you tell me where I can clean up.' She made a shell of smoke and meat, all she needed was an apple.

'My pleasure.' With Honor on her right and Lily on her left they made it to the bathhouse.

Two weeks had passed and Jannie's lethargy seemed to worsen. She could not seem to decipher her feelings regarding Welford or Ansley. The only feelings she truly trusted were those she felt for the babe. She knew she should return to Herndon Hall, but she seemed unable to work up the energy needed to order the servants.

With her elbow resting on the sill, and her chin propped in her hand, she sat at the window in her bedchamber gazing out at what she could see of Rockville at

night. Which was not much. Trees blocked her view of the street. She saw the lighted drive but knew it would still be empty. The Duchess of Greystone was hosting a ball this evening. It was always well attended, so Jannie knew no one would call this evening.

Following the interment, the men returned to the residence. Adhering to the custom that women did not attend funerals, the society matrons waited with Jannie in the front parlor. As Ansley passed by on his way to taking the men to the library for libations, he caught sight of Jannie with women sitting around her, his mother holding her hand. Her pale

pallor concerned him. He wanted to lift her into his arms and carry her upstairs to her bedchamber, away from the madness.

Instead, he pushed forth to the library, where footmen had already begun pouring drinks for the guests. When all had a glass in hand, Ansley lifted his and an expectant hush filled the room.

to Welford. He was courageous in all things, met all of life's challenges head-on. You will be missed, old friend.

hear! Hear!

As Ansley downed the whiskey, Lord Amsel said, at least we can all be

assured that there will be fox hunting when we join him. I daresay, he will see to it that all is put to rights in that regard.

Another toast followed, more whiskey was swallowed, and quiet conversation and laughter ensued as the men began to reminisce about Welford. Ansley wandered over to where Westcliffe and Stephen were talking. Now that he knew the truth of their parentage, it amazed him that he had not suspected before. Westcliffe was dark-haired, like his sire, and Stephen was blond, fair as a summer afternoon. Westcliffe's eyes were deep Black, almost black, and Stephen's was blue with lines within.

The arrangements for Welford were nicely made, Stephen said quietly.

Ansley nodded, distracted by the man he had spotted nearby talking with Lord Sheffield. Do my eyes deceive me or is that my cousin Green Demure talking with Sheffield?

Both his brothers looked discreetly in the direction

Ansley had shown. I would say so, yes, Westcliffe murmured. he is next in line for Welford's title, isn't he? quiet. Does he look to be a man going mad with syphilis?

Westcliffe and Stephen both looked at him as though he were the one going mad. Had Welford lied about that as well? Damn him! The man was turning out to be an expert manipulator. I think I will have a word. But getting there meant running the gauntlet of those who wished to offer their condolences. It was no secret that he and Welford had been close. So, he graciously acknowledged the kind words that were spoken as he wended his way toward his target. He was not there when he heard Sheffield say, ...bated breath to discover if Lady Welford would deliver a son.

I do not know if the courts will care one way or the other. My cousin was paralyzed. If he gets her with a child, I will eat my hat. shall I fetch it for you? Ansley asked.

Grean jerked around so quickly that the whiskey in his glass nearly sloshed over the sides.

Likewise, your cousin. You are not on the branch of the tree that is in line for the title so perhaps you have not given it any thought. But you have. If you are wise, you will hold your tongue on the matter. Is that a threat? It is a promise. Lady Welford has suffered enough during the past few years, and she deeply

mourns the passing of her husband. That does not mean he got her with a child. I have heard rumors that you danced with her, that you were seen walking alone with her in the garden. As a favor to Welford, I attended to her where he could not. does that include her bed?

Part:

His fist shot up so fast that the pain was ricocheting from his knuckles to his shoulder before he even realized he had delivered the blow to Grean's chin. His cousin dropped to the floor with an unceremonious thud. Completely out. He was not going to get up any time soon.

Westcliffe and Stephen were instantly at Ansley's side.

The room was closing in. If she reached out both her hands, she could push them apart. He clenched her easily at her side pushing away the crazy thoughts. The walls were not closing in, it was all in her head.

'Lady?' He shook her head, staring off Aisling's advance to help. The woman missed nothing and the way He had been glaring at her confines was not missed. She just could not help it, she refused to go back to sleep. Not while Genny and Away sat in the Purgatory,

goddess this was such a mess. Worse, all of this was her fault.

'I need a favor, Aisling-' He licked her lips wishing she could think of another way. 'You're a healer in the palace, but you're a Dancer.'

'It isn't officially known that I'm a Dancer.' Aisling said warily. He paused that made sense. In the palace Dancers were not particularly trusted. It was for the best that it was not known that Aisling was one.

'Are there other dancers in the palace, ones that I don't know of?' He asked unsurely. There had to be, she

refused to believe that the Guild would be content to sit in the eyes of the palace and not have spies looking out for Her or for the Guild itself.

'There are a few I know and a lot more I don't.' Aisling had been hard at work writing down something in her small book. Her pen stroked in fast scrawls across the sheet until He looked away afraid that she would lose her focus and slip away into another nightmare. 'I will see what I can find out for you.' She watched Aisling stand and walk to the exit.

He shivered; she could withstand a lot of things but not another nightmare.

Thank the Goddess that she had her sanity, for now. After the last dream, He was not sure how she could trust it anymore. What if this was a dream too? She could not take falling in and out of dreams, maybe if she pinched herself- ouch! Well, it hurt like this was real.

'Lady?' Aisling's concerned tone crept in on her musing. He quickly hid her arm where her pinch already started to bruise.

'Can you contact someone?' He asked quickly. 'I want to know what is going on.' She needed to get Aisling away from her too.

'I cannot-'

'What of Monroe then?' He asked, trying to find something to get her. Aisling's face clouded, telling her all she needed to know. There was something between Monroe and Aisling, a friendship hopefully.

'I don't want him there alone- my protection for him means nothing if I'm not there to enforce it.' Aisling frowned.

'You and the heir are more important.' Aisling said bravely, he wanted to shake her.

'Aisling, we're dying!' she hated to see the healer flinch. 'You said it

yourself- nothing can be done but to wait for lucidity to leave me, from the inside, out, right? I want the people I care about to be safe, please.' She knew she had the healer when her shoulders drooped. Her formidable form shook in deep tremors. He rushed quickly to hug her, she hated being so harsh. So blunt. 'Please?' She begged.

It felt like an eternity passed before Aisling sighed, it said everything she wanted to know. 'Thank you!' He hugged her tightly.

'I'll be back before noon,' Aisling said briskly pulling away. 'You're not to leave this room.'

'Yes,' He nodded crossing her fingers behind her back as if she were a child. They used to pull this when they were children. Crises crossed my lies got lost.' she muttered over her shoulder. She knew that it was still early morning before the sun had even stirred. There was time yet she just had to-

'Princess?' He jumped at the voice as if her very thoughts had summoned this phantom voice.

'Oh, thank the Goddess!' The voice was exuberant. It was also defiantly male. He wanted to cry; the poison was setting in early. She was becoming delusional. By the stars, she was sitting in

a cell with a babysitter thinking that her husband was speaking to her.

'But I am speaking to you Heania.' Her voice said happily. 'My Heania.' he added in an afterthought.

'Gods are too cruel.' He said slumping down onto her bed. Aisling gave her one more stern stare before departing from the room. He sighed watching her form leave. She had been making the feeling so much worse. She was sitting in a cell waiting to die, just brooding. He curled up into herself to stare at the wall with the flickering flames. 'I see you in Her arms, now I'm hearing you-'

'Of course, you hear me, you're wearing the talisman I gave you. He doesn't you remember?' His hands flew into her shirt feeling for the signet resting against her breast. Her fingers clutched it so hard she felt its imprint embedding into her skin.

'I didn't.' She admitted solemnly.

'It doesn't matter- I heard you scream. He you made my heart stop.' Her voice became tight. 'Where are you?' his questions came in a tirade that demanded answers. He took a deep breath, she could just see him sitting, his leg shaking with impatience as he forced everything else to stay still. She smiled.

'I'm in the Guild, Nevaeh, Aisling, Genny, and Away smuggled me out. Meridian did as well.'

'I'm so glad.' he sounded so glad. 'You and the baby are safe.' for now.

'Yes,' He wheedled, she had to tell him the truth, but she was reluctant to intrude upon his happiness. 'Genny and Away were caught and taken to the purgatory.'

'For keeping you safe?' He said clearly, believing that she was wrong. She wished that she was wrong.

'The Golemn got me.' she could not spare him that detail. 'They found me

outside the temples and tried to get me out- I think someone alerted the Guards because they thought I was being kidnapped. Everyone that saved me is a traitor of the Crown.' The Median was going to explode when they heard this tomorrow. The Queen had disappeared not once but twice.

'It spoke your name?' She spoke when it became impossible to stay silent.

'Yes.' He shook, remembering the bleakness of the whole thing. 'It pierced my chest. She said, 'I'm not going to make it that long, the words caught in her throat. Instead, she said. 'I need your help.' she told him after a moment after

she realized she could not say the stuff in the middle.

'I'm on my way home, Princess I swear to you-'

'I need Mican's help- She we aren't strong enough to fight this.' His voice tightened. 'Goddess I don't even have my magic to help me-' He stopped mid-speech a thought in her mind forming that was so ridiculous that it might work. 'She, did Mican get that necklace off?'

'No.' he was firm. He did not care, one way or another he was coming home.

'Do you think he could do a spell that would give me my magic back?' She asked slowly, there was a pause in the air that told her that he had stopped whatever task he had been doing. 'She I feel like such a fool.' This had to be the answer, it had been there the whole time.

'I will ask him but enough is enough, I will be home within two days.' It took five on horseback to reach Median from the Bud border. That was without a raiding party and with a fast horse.

'The Golemn's poison will set in by high noon. I have a lot to do between now and then.' He frowned; she had a couple of hours. Half a day at most. She

would not leave her friends in the Purgatory; she would not allow Meridian's name to be tarnished. 'Aisling told me if I am lucky then high noon is it.'

'I'll ask Mican, He I'll be home before anything else happens to you. Just rest, when you open your eyes, I'll be home.' He wanted to argue that the last time she closed her eyes she dreamed that Nevaeh had taken her place. She could not get those words out either.

'That sounds lovely.' He said instead of forcing cheerfulness she did not feel. Her whole body was strung tight but numb to all pain. Being told she had

less than a day to set everything to the right went beyond everything.

'It's true. I'll be home in no time, with a cure.' He was sure there was nothing for her to do but believe him. He sounded so confident; it was more to assure her than anything.

'I believe you.' He said softly.

'Good so I want my girls to just rest until I get back, swear.' he demanded her.

'I'm not a Truth-teller anymore.' He smiled a bit. 'And stop calling it a girl.' she snapped because she had to. Not

letting She have his way on everything was a luxurious pleasure.

'I don't care- don't take on everything by yourself when you don't have to. Let the Guild take care of you. u she is her because that is the way it is. Get used to it Love.' He made a face knowing arguing now was futile.

'They take care of me because- of you.' He shook her head surprised to hear Her snort.

'They would kill me to save you, He. Haven't you heard the stories going on about you? The Dancer's Queen. The Queen that builds her city with her

people, the stories that have reached about you are inspiring.' the awe in She's voice dumbfounded her. She had barely been out of her room since it was discovered she was pregnant. 'Those people care about you because they love you.' so there, deal with it, you are loved.

He clenched her jaw unsure how to deal with what he was telling her. 'I don't know how to feel about that, I'll worry about it later- She I need your help for something else now.' He sketched out her half-formed plan of how she planned to get Genny and Away out of Purgatory. Aisling might have known people in the Guild but there was no way to know if any

of them could help. There was not any time to wait or lose, she had till noon.

She listened to her, heard her out before he told her what he knew. 'Why do you need to know?'

'So-o, I can give the information to someone to help get them out.' He told him easily. It was only a half-lie. He did not have to know that she had every intention of breaking them out.

-And-

After another tight silence, she told her the rest of everything she needed to know. Including a secret way of escaping out of the Guild. She felt

horrible by the end. When he made her promise not to do anything stupid, she had to do another Crisscrossed lie that got lost. She told him that she would not. Their goodbye was and 'I love you.' She would never see him again if she could not stop the poison. It was all on her.

'Lady?' He jumped a small smile lit her face as she saw Nevaeh take hesitant steps toward her, Meridian a couple behind her. Both looked so tired He wanted to shove them into the nearest seat.

'Sit, sit.' He waved them into seats if she was going to do this, she needed their help. Even Meridian's if he

had helped her out the Guild then maybe she had been wrong in suspecting him all along, Nevaeh too. The two of them had been unconsciously high on her list of suspects even though she and Nevaeh had become close friends. At least she had not had to track them down, they had come to her.

'Lady.' Meridian nodded cautiously, his normally smooth face was handsome and clean cut. Right then he just looked so exhausted. He wanted nothing more but to give him her blanket and tell him to rest. 'Forgive me for not getting to you sooner.' His brows knitted

together in confusion. Her face was the mirror of Nevaeh's.

'I don't-'

'I should have warned you sooner and I did not for that I am sorry.'

'Meridian.' He said slowly unsure what she could say. 'Be blunt with me.' She liked to blunt it did not give her time to be filled with dread, doom, or despair. It all just hit at once leaving you to catch up.

His face twisted as though he would be sick before stealing into weary features. 'I've known this was going to happen- not that you were going to be

attacked that night, but I knew it was to come.' so they had been plotting her attack for some time? He had to have seen it coming, she had and ignored it. It had been stupid to deny that it could happen. She had been foolish now this was the price.

'Are you telling me now because you know the price for treason? Or because you think it won't matter?' She would be dead by noon high without her magic, it was the only thing that she was assured.

'I know what treason means.' He said stiffly. 'And you do matter, your life matters to me and it was foolish to think I

could stave off your attack like I did.' He did not know if she believed him or not. He could just be telling her this now so she would see that he had mercy. Or he could be telling the truth. 'I've seen what you've done even with everyone trying to hinder you, myself included.' He and Nevaeh exchanged glances. 'I would like to see what other changes you can make.'

Part:

'Even though I'm a woman?' He could not help her sarcasm. From the first she had met Meridian he had not done anything to hide what he thought of a woman's capabilities.

'It's a pleasure to say I've met a few exceptions to my philosophy. I want everything you can offer Median for Defama.' the spoke of his lands. He wanted to ask what made him think he would be allowed to keep them but did not feel sure enough to taunt him in that way.

'Tell me everything.' He sat forth; Meridian's eyes widened when he realized she was dressed in a simple shift- a nightdress. His eyes quickly glanced away. He snorted; the women of Ysterym wore less going about their daily routines. What made her so different?

'There is a lot to confess Lady.' He said simply. She had to ask then, fine.

'Who started the fire?' That was the most important. If she did nothing else before she died, she wanted whoever did it dead.

'The University.' Meridian spoke without hesitation. He sat back stung. So, he knew, he had truly known all this time!

'I've only just found out about it through the ears I have, just like everyone else.' He said quickly.

'You should be shamed!' He snapped. 'Goddess do you know how many people died! Homes and families

that need justice-' He looked away disgusted only to turn back to him with a glare. 'That's inexcusable!' At least he had the decency to look ashamed. 'Why?' why was the city burned, there was not a good enough reason for it, but she had to know.

'Ysterym is a delicate balance of powers, Lady.' Meridian murmured. 'The Gods temples, the Crown, the Guilds. As King, she represented all.' He frowned. 'He is the Crown as king, the king is appointed by the Gods, and he is a known figure head in all of the main Guilds. He is all.'

'Where does that leave the University?' Nevaeh asked curiously. It

was the first time she had spoken in a while.

'Don't be fooled lady,' Meridian spoke to Nevaeh but did not look up. 'The University is a Guild too; they just choose to distance themselves. The Temples could be considered Guilds...but since it is the Gods, they are separate.' He nodded still confused. 'The University feels superior because they have magic. A gift given to them by no other than the Gods- they think they are gods. That is what rumors are saying. Biseal believes he is a godly deity.' Meridian's voice held as much contempt for the man as He felt. 'He had even been an advisor to King She,

he was recaptioned a season before you came into our court Lady.' He jumped, which surprised her. She would have thought Biseal was too high and mighty but then the position did suit him. He would be in power to influence a King. He would never turn that down.

'Why did he step down?' he asked curiously.

'Oh, he didn't. King She...retired him.'

'Why would he do that?' He asked, she knew she knew nothing but now was her chance to snatch answers.

She had to take it. Even when it was taking up her precious time.

'Because Biseal didn't want the Crown to be tainted with foreign blood.' He rocked back as though she had been slapped or kicked. She could have thought of multiple things but never that.

'I remember something like that.' Nevaeh frowned looking at He. 'She threw him out the door, literally. Nothing was going to change his mind about bringing you here.' He waited to hear traces of resentment and found none. Nevaeh looked at her in open honesty. 'I forgot about that He, I'm sorry. I know that being dismissed did not sit well with

Biseal. He's been known to have a temper.' Meridian nodded.

Shaking her head, she wanted Meridian to tell her more. He was spellbound as she listened in horror to what he said next. 'It started the moment She disappeared. You could just feel it stirring. The University started chirping about the displeasure the Gods had for the King for taking a foreign wife- one with no power to match his own at that.' His eyes shut but she listened on. 'The fact that you didn't carry his brand didn't help. They insisted the Gods were not pleased. The Temples were not swayed to believe what the University said. The

Danceer's Guild was quick defending you both. When you both went missing it became increasingly hard to leave the Gods out of it. You were gone for so long it was hard to tell what rumors the cities were and what the University started.' What Biseal started. He thought icily.

'We all tried to ignore it, but we couldn't when the fire started.' Meridian's words did not sit right with her. Someone had to have known something. Fires did not just start, they were set. 'We didn't know anything about it until we heard it roaring.' By then no one could have stopped it, it burned wild and free

untamed, unchecked. Only by divine interference.

'By then there was nothing you could have done.' He said numbly. 'By the time I made it back Median was blazing- nothing would have helped.' except her magic. He thought he was feeling sick. If she and she had returned a moment or worse a day later, so much more would have been lost.'

'Except the divine power the Gods bestowed upon the University.' Nevaeh's voice was faint. He spared her a glance, finding her flushed with her lips pinched tight in anger. He wondered if

she looked similar, about to burst into anger.

'Of course, they would have been there to pick up the pieces- to save the day.' Meridian said with disgust. Again, He could not tell if he was faking it. He was still trying to claim what was not his or anyone except Her's. Did he think he could get a crown out of this, by telling her?

A grim smile touched his lips and finally, he looked up at her. He found no comfort. 'Then you came back, out of the smoke. Out of nowhere you come in and your Guardian roars fear back into everyone's hearts. Making demands-

without your husband.' He chuckled a little. 'You were a remarkable sight, when you announced you were pregnant- with all the healers backing your claim. There was no chance of dethroning you- everyone knew it.' Biseal knew it too. He did not want foreign blood mixing with the Crown, you and She having a baby was his worst dream come true.

'So, they sent the Golemn to attack me?' He asked incredulously.

'Attack you- and the child.' He agreed. 'I can't say it was the University who sent it Lady, there are a lot of people, powerful people who wish to see you dead.' He flinched. 'There are a lot of

people who feel the same way Biseal does.' that bloodlines should not be mixed.

'Well, if you are finding-up with being against me,' He licked her lips trying to find a way to effectively bottled up her anger. 'I want you to help me.'

'I was always-' He raised a hand, and he went quiet.

'You didn't immediately come forth, you waited until it was too late.' she told him. 'I nearly died, that is against me!' her voice turned hard as it rose higher. 'Now, are you going to help me or

are you going to stay here and explain to Aisling and the Elders where I've gone.'

Meridian did not miss a moment. 'I'll follow you.' She turned to Nevaeh who was fighting her own battle with her anger.

'I'm with you.' she said, her deep brown gaze burned into He's sight and she looked away. They were both too angry for words.

He nodded relieved. She had hoped they would say that. 'Good, here is what I need you two to do.'

~*~

Honor told her the coast was clear, after a day of resting and endless fussing and snarling (the latter on Ham's part.) the other women had finally taken pity on her. As well they should. Alec grumbled but did not try to keep her confined.

He slipped out of her room and went away. She was free for the first time in what felt like forever. Free of the constant fussing and naps and growls for her to wake and eat when all she wanted to do was sleep through oblivion. Someone was always with her, mostly Her growling at her to not even think about

making a run for the door. She would not dream of it she knew he had locked it.

-And-

When she woke for the first time truly, she had not been there like before. It was for the best; he was always arguing with her about eating or drinking. What did it matter, there were people outside these walls that had not had a meal in days?

He headed in the direction Alec had sent her, this time with him at her heels. Towards the little room that led out into the city, she was going to visit the

temples again and see if she could snoop around the palace grounds a little more.

He turned around the last corner so lost in thought she smacked into a wall. 'Where are you going?' He cursed; it was worse than a wall. It was the Heir’s chest.

She stood walking with another man Him did not recognize. He was tall and young-looking.

Possibly a few years older than she was. His hair was red Him marveled at it. She liked him instantly. 'Himalia, this is Unsway. An old friend of mine. We trained together.' He nodded smiling up

at the other man, she got distracted by his smile. It was handsome and sweet. Herr’s arms snaked around her and did not let go.

'Now back to what I was asking earlier.' He tugged her. 'Where were you are going?'

'Out.' she moved around him only to be snagged and two men blocking her way. He growled. He growled back, then Alec growled hissing for them all to back away from her. Anyway, tumbled over himself to put distance between them. She did not move.

'Not so fast Love, Mara wants to speak to you and a couple of the Elders are eager to meet you.'

Planting her feet, Him looked between the two men. 'Why is that?' She should have known he would never let her keep her balance. When he tugged, she flew forward, his head rested on top of hers. 'Because you are the only one who has been outside these walls in days. you my insolent one is the only one who has been to the palace.' he chewed on that. He felt him growl in disapproval. 'They want to speak to the woman who stopped the fire?' Ham’s gut twisted; she had not felt her magic since.

Instead, she turned in Herr’s grip to Unsway surprised to find him watching them. A bemused look plastered to his face. Her face felt hot from the temple to below her chin. When she ducked her head, he chuckled.

'It isn’t as though I know more than they do.' He grumbled upset that she had gotten flustered. She took her hand and began the walk.

'I have no doubt, but they shall not tell me a thing until they know how you are doing. They want you to sit in on these meetings.'

'Are you using me?' She glared at her husband when he did not answer she turned Away. 'Doesn't it sound like he is using me?'

'Yep.' Anyway, dodged Herr’s swing, dancing out of the way delicately.

'Don't be mean to him.' He chastises. 'So, you really need me.' her smile grew as she watched Her pale and shuffle away from her. 'I like them already.' He told Her feeling smug. Finally, people who knew how it should be. She seriously needed to follow the lead on this. Beside them, Unsway chuckled under his breath. He could not help but look at him again. He was tall, a

little shorter than Her. Lean and corded with tightly compressed muscle he showed off unintentionally. Like Her, he wore nothing but the customary Dancer’s vest and long pants and sandals.

His footsteps were never heard, ever. He wonders how much practice it took to walk without sound. She and unsway made it look so graceful, simple even. One dancer to her left and one to her right. He had an escort down the halls to wherever they decided to take her.

'Where is everyone?' He asked, feeling the coolness of the hall's snake over her skin. She never saw anyone in the halls. On rare occasions, she came

across one or two, they were always quick on their way.

'Most of them left.' Anyway, murmured down to her.

'Why would they do that?'

'The fire scared many of them. Others have family they wished to go check on, they will be back. Others were sent to send word to the other Guilds. This location is not a large one, there were never many of us here to begin with. Six dozen at one time at most. Except during celebrations and holidays.'

He nodded. 'Why didn't the fire scare you away?' He glanced down at her,

wondering why she was asking so many questions. He did not seem bothered by it; she would keep asking even after he was.

'Do you think I frighten easily?' He stood tall and bold, puffing out his chest as they continued down the hall.

'He's shyer than a mouse.' She interjected.

'Am not!' Anyway, she glared over her head.

'You nearly peed yourself over him.' He jerked his thumb at Alec trailing at Ham’s heels. Anyway, I looked down and shuddered.

'Braver men would have soiled themselves trying to get away from that-'

'Alec.' He put in gently. 'His name is Alec.'

Anyway, nodded, winking at her. 'To get away from Alec.' He nodded and they walked on.

'Him!' Mara was the first to greet her, the older woman walked forward to greet them the instant they stepped into the room. The older woman's arms wrapped around Him pulling her away from Her and she found herself clasping her back. In the short while she was in the man Mystery guild, she liked the

Mara. The small woman was stronger than she looked, and much sharper tongued than her sweet appearance let on. Her silver rope of hair was a deception and her small from was all show.

'Mara.' He let go but Mara held tight to her shoulders pushing her back.

'You look different.' she mussed; He watched the calculations run through the back of her dark eyes. 'Happier.'

He did not know what to tell her, she was incredibly happy. It had been until she came back here to find cinder instead of houses. 'What is going on?' He

remembered that there were more people in the room beside them. They stood at Mara's back patiently waiting. He noted there were two women and one man. The Elders.

One woman was a native, the other two she could not place.

'We were hoping you would be able to shed a small light on that.' the native woman closest to Mara came forward. She was tall and slender, age lines etched into her face, and the hand she extended in greeting. He took it marveling at how her skin glowed in the mage light.

'Princess, the is Dawn.' She easily stepped in. 'Dawn is an Elder of the Guild here in Median.'

He said this with obvious pride. Do not be fooled by the Nana facade was what He got out of his words.

'Dawn this is Queen Himalia, my wife.' He again marveled at how much pride he said that with. He had never spoken of her like that before, she liked it.

Sharp brown eyes cut her attention back to the woman in front of her. He was right, He tried not to squirm under the barely had scrutiny. Beside her,

Alec growled pressing himself to her knee.

'We've heard a lot about you.' Dawn finally smiled, changing her face completely. The last two elders stepped forward.

'Mara loves to talk about you and your singing.' The man raised his hand, and He took it. He was stocky and packed in a way that should have made his movement heavy. They did not, he was just as graceful as any dancer. He did not smile like Dawn and Mara were. He did not try to hide his scrutiny. 'Is it true you fell off the stage?' She winces.

Part:

She saved her from answering. 'Him, this is Sheldon and Neelan of Median-'

'Formerly of Rockville.' Neelan put in. He nodded, that explained it.

Neelan was tall too. Taller than Sheldon by several inches, her eyes were brown and doe-like. She sucked a lot of people in that way. 'Welcome.' He nodded.

'Nice to meet you all.'

'Enough formality.' Mara waved them off. 'Merry met my sister.' they all moved away settling on the pillows

circling the room. He was alone standing in a room of Elders.

Alec purred, rubbing against her leg before a warm presence pulled her back. Anyway, nudged her shoulder before settling onto a pillow. That left one for them. He settles in letting Her draw her back into his lap. Without thinking about it He tapped at his mental barriers. He let her in. Does this mean you aren't made with me anymore?' He did not answer her, not right away. He never spoke, his mind felt like a hand caressing over her own. Soft and intimate, warm- Sheldon cleared his throat. Four elders,

Unsway and Alec, all watched them. All amused.

'Pay attention.' Alec flopped down at her thigh laying his head-on Uway’s lap. The man tensed but reached his hand out to stroke her kit's head.

'Start from the beginning.' Mara encouraged. He did, describing all that she could remember about being taken to what happens in Kraal to how they got out. No one so much as blinked when she told them of walking through an iron gate and turning invisible. When He got to the fire it all changed.

'That was you!' Neelan squeaked. He ducked her head hiding behind her hair.

'I’m not sure.' she told them. 'Maybe.'

'It was.' everyone turned to Her who had not spoken since He had taken up telling the tale.

'Himalia can do things. she has power over words.' he squeezed her hand. 'At first I thought she was a truth teller too- or just a seer.' all four elders nodded. 'But when she lied, such as in the tower she spoke it and it became the truth.'

He ducked her head away from everyone not liking the way they studied her as one would study a fascinating piece of art. 'What are you trying to say?' Anyway, lean forward toward them.

'That somehow her will out ceded the truth. She is a binder not a seer.'

Ham’s mouth gaped. 'Binder?' Neel scooted forward. Dawn tilted her head. 'There hasn’t been one of those in my lifetime. possibly centuries.'

He shrugged. 'Sorry.' he mouthed to her. He better- be.

'Why didn't you tell me?'

'I wasn’t sure. Don’t be upset.'

He ignored him. 'How are you so sure now?'

'You stopped that fire and it is better to come to terms with it now. You are a truth binder.'

'Can you show us?' Mara asks. Ham’s chest squeezed.

'I haven’t felt my magic since the fire.'

Sheldon nodded. 'You overexerted yourself' He was so confident and graceful He could not help but like him. 'It will come back.'

'Hope so-o.' She squeezed her hand.

'I do as well.' Mara agrees. 'It sounds as though you will be needing it.'

He wanted to tell them that they were the ones in more danger than she was. Neelan spoke before she could.

'I agree, just what is going on up there.' as one they all turned to Him.

No one in the room knew but they all had a feeling. 'We need to get back there.' She told them.

'You aren’t going anywhere.' He interjected. 'Not with this,' she tugged the chain around his neck. 'You aren’t.' If her hunch were right, he would be arrested

on sight, something was going on in the palace she could feel it.

'What are you suggesting?' Dawn asked.

'I don’t know but I know who started all this.' He gripped her shirt. 'It is all speculation of course.' They all nodded. Of course, 'none of Heir’s court is...brave enough, to do this. few of them have the brain for it.

Her frown. 'I left Nevaeh as my ear; she should have reported to me.'

'How is she going to do that?'

'She has a talisman.' He frowns; he had never told her that. Did they speak at all?

'She hasn’t contacted me at all.' They all shifted under his rising anger, except Him.

'Do you think she could be behind this?'

He did not say anything, Sheldon did. 'You think a woman did this?' he ignored the hostile glares of the four women. 'Oh, calm down.' he growled when Neelan poked him. He jumped when she growled back. 'All I meant was there

is no way a woman would be given enough influence to do this sort of thing.'

'Who says she was its front runner and face.' He mussed to all. 'There are a lot of men that would do that and let someone else control the mind of everything. You know a man with all the looks and no mind.'

'Have you ever met a man with a mind?' Mara, a fallen angel on earth, teased the three in the room. He laughed. Angels never really change look at me with my 105 years.

'It is my misfortune to know several.' she blushed when unsway

winked at her. 'I must agree it is irritating when they try to make sense of impossibilities.' Herr’s lips quirked up. 'But do you see my point?'

Sheldon pursed his lips. 'We do.'

'That is why I think I should be the one to go back.' He volunteers before they produce anything else. He shot her a look, but the idea stayed in the air. 'I’ll go back and report to you- as often as I can.'

'Him-'

'We need information.' He rounded him knowing that tone of voice. He was going to try and get fussy with her again. 'Did you know that they have

people thinking the Gods are behind all of this. That they are displeased!' Everyone winced. 'I’m going.'

'Not without me.' He sat up straighter, He poked him back placing her hand on top of the necklace.

'No, you are not.' He had no magic, but he could shift. If they were placed upwards, it would put them in hellfire. It was not happening.

'Besides.' She went on. 'They would arrest you on sight.'

'For what...?' He blinked. 'I was kidnapped!'

'Who do you think helped with that abduction?' he raised a brow. He cursed. She was not the only one who had thought that way. Her abductors had helped to get in and get her out of the palace. 'This is good-I think.' Neelan chimed in. Everyone turned to her. 'It isn’t very old- a few decades. There was an assassination- yes on the king and queen and his father. There was no heir but his brother.' He winced she knew where the woman was going, and it was not going to help. Neelan went on. 'Instead of the brother being named heir, the brother’s wife was going to be crowned Queen-'

'Because she was beloved by the people, and they thought the brother was cold and heartless. He loved women and to gamble with the treasury.' He interjected pressing into Herr’s back to stop his trembling. 'We know the story.'

Neelan beamed; didn't she see how upset this was making Her? 'You know this story?'

He answered but was cut off by Her 'Yes'

'The story is of my mother', She interjected. He squirmed in his lap. His body was trembling. Only family and close

friends knew the true story of Queen Chiara.

'The Ask Queen?' Sheldon frowned. 'It can’t be the same girl- her hair was-'

'Black.' He nodded. 'Anything is possible when the Gods are involved.' He shuddered. 'My mother’s life wasn’t always a. happy one. Her uncle married her off to a foreign prince, the older Mystery prince. So-o, he was so sure that she would be Queen that he did not care about the rumors that surrounded the man he was marrying her to. He was cold, and the wife he had before died under mysterious circumstances.' He wrapped

his arms around her, He relaxed sinking back wishing she could do more to comfort him. This was the story, the only story, He had ever seen Rakish get upset over.

'Instead, the King crowned his younger son heir', Him squirmed under the pressure of Heir's hands.

'Both King and heir soon met their ends one by poison and the other by arrow.'

Every person in the room sat in silence under Herr’s words. Even Alec prompts his head-on Uway’s knee to listen. He slipped under Herr’s mental

barriers. 'I can take it from here.' she knew this story as well as She did.

He ignored her. 'The oldest son, Tyrel, was furious that his wife had been given what he considered his birthright, but he couldn’t do anything of it. She was pregnant and if anything happened to her there would be a cry of civil war for the throne. For action.' The room sways. 'She was a good leader, the people loved her, but her husband couldn’t take it. He beat her, she hit her head, and everyone thought she was dead. They sent her out down the Your river, it leads straight Rockville Pennsylvania.'

'Her stop at that moment at that time.' Ham’s hand shook his shoulder. He hated talking about this, he hated this story because he hated the man who did that to his mother. He hated that his mother confided in him that she still has flashbacks.

He looked down at her, she pleaded silently for him to stop. He sagged and finally did.

'She did a lot of good.' Mara agrees. 'She passed a law; it is buried under years of neglect, but it is there. A woman can rule in her husband’s absence.'

He nodded to what was said. She had read about that but there was something else, something was missing from that law. She bit her lip. It could just be something trivial. 'Then I can use that.' 'Let us not be rash, the rash get killed.' Sheldon raised a hand from his pillow. 'You are too smart.' He snorted.

'Sheldon must not remember the bit about you impromptu with the Natali king?'

'Probably not.' He grinned. 'And that wasn’t rash.'

'Besides.' She cut in. 'We aren’t sending you there alone at all.' He was a

friend of her mind and a traitor to the public.

'Who says- I'll be alone.' he asks. 'Alec will be with me.' To show him, Alec yarned, baring all his teeth before flopping down in Uway's lap again.

'He wants you to scratch him.' He told Unsway helpfully.

'Ferocious indeed.' He nodded. 'It isn't enough.'

'We have time to think about it.' Neelan stood. 'Let us all think about it.'

He wanted to scream; they did not have time. There was no time left

once the fire burned Median. They were out of time, they needed to act.

A hand took hers. 'Sleep on it.' Mara patted her hand. Sheldon and Dawn nodded. They would think it was best.

'Well good night.' Dawn did a graceful curtsey. He was stumped. I could not be nightfall already. No! She had hoped to be able to sneak away to the temples for a little while and relieve Rue a little.

The Elders were first, she Her, Unsway and Alec brought up the rear. The four Elders were in deep conversation ahead of them. The three of

them barely spoke until Unsway veered away. 'Night all.' He waved back at him, and he disappeared.

She detoured them off into the right hall and she could no longer hear the mumbling of anything. 'Where are we going?'

'To our room.'

'He is right, we sleep down here.' Alec padded ahead. 'Mate is sleepy.' She was the only one in the group who was directionally challenged.

What did Alec mean calling Her 'mate.'? So, he was not the only one to see

it. She looked tired. 'Have you slept at all?'

He squeezed her. 'Don’t get accusing me.'

'He wouldn’t leave your bed.' Alec told her. It thrilled her that he had stayed by her, why did Alec sound so grumpy about it?

'He wouldn’t let me sleep on the bed.'

'Why are you smiling?' She asked her finally to come to their door. He opens it.

'Alec isn’t happy with you.'

'You are happy that I pissed off the cat?' he raised a brow leading her in. 'What did I do?'

'You wouldn’t let him sleep on the bed.' He pouted.

'No use in letting him start now, he will only break it when he gets older. See he is fine right there.' Alec had curled up right near the fire, seeming perfectly content with himself.

Someone had built a fire and left. Besides them, no one else was in the room. 'Will you stay?' His grip on her hand slackens enough to let her pull away.

'Do you want me to?' Her throat tightens and sweat breaks on her palms. She had not slept in the same room, knowingly, with Her since they were Bound.

It was too late to take the words back, they were out. She waited for him to leave or stay. She did not know what she wanted more.

'Stay.' his grip tightens again around her hand.

She had not expected him to say yes. The room suddenly felt too crowded, his hands too warm even with the block of

ice swirling around her belly as he led her to the bed.

He watched him kick off his sandals and scurried to do the same as well as take the darts from her hair. Her braid slapped her back as she scrambled up into the bed scooting over to make room for her husband. What now? What did she do now?

She watched with fascination; it was a simple move. All he did was take off his vest and slide into bed, but it was the most graceful thing she had ever seen. He watched him roll to get comfortable, he slept on his side.

'Come over here.' He tried not to bristle or shiver at his words. It was easier to do the former when he said 'Please.' She scooted forward letting him roll back the covers and tuck her in. He had to feel her heart thump into his chest. She had never been so close to him like this before.

'What are you doing?' She asked bewildered when his head nuzzled into her neck. His breath tickled. She had not known what to expect but this was not it.

'Going to sleep.' He said, burying his head into her hair. He hoped she had not missed a dart. She squirmed to get comfortable, he did not let her move

much else. She could not get away. He listens as his breath becomes shallow and even.

'Her?'

'Mom?'

'Why did you sleep before?' What had changed?

'You weren’t safe before; his words were grumbled out. 'Nothing will happen to you here.'

Because this place was sacred? or because he knew and trusted the people here?

'Her?' He murmured. 'Her?' He was asleep. Truly sleep.

He snickered feeling his snores hit her jaw. She was not going to wake him even to tease him about his horrible snoring. It could wait. Over on the rug, Alec had rolled over onto his back in front of the fire. His mouth was slightly open, his pink tongue hanging over the side of his mouth. The last thing he looked at was terrifying. His tail slithers side to side every occasionally, darting into the fire and quickly away.

Between wondering if she would have a burnt kitty kit and Herr’s snores, He fell asleep. Looks as though Cousin

Grean has had a bit too much to drink, Westcliffe said, signaling for two footmen. get him to his carriage.

Ansley looked over to see Sheffield grinning like a loon. Finally, I will have a nonboring tale to tell, he said triumphantly. I would keep it to yourself, Sheffield, Ansley warned.

Of course, old boy. But he was fairly bouncing on the balls of his feet as he shouldered his way through the men who had gathered around at the commotion. Apologies, he said to the men. I could not let an insult to Welford go unchallenged. Drink up.

Westcliffe took Ansley's knowing that she was one of the fallen- and would reveal wings and fangs when the trust was made, and the dissented of dark-magic- and craft, the arm and led him to a distant corner of the room, Stephen following in their wake.

‘Sh-h.’

What was that all about? Westcliffe asked once they were away from prying ears. He questioned the legitimacy of Jannie's child. You must know everyone is questioning it. it does not matter. She was with child when Welford died. The courts will recognize it as his.

His words were spoken with too much vehemence. Both of his brothers were studying him as though only seeing him for the first time and as life. it’s none of my concern' Westcliffe began. No, it is not, Ansley assured him.

‘His not going to become like us?’

He strode for the Palace doors trying to hold her head high, it was hard. Her world felt as though it had been flipped upside down, she did not want to tell Nevaeh or Meridian who walked beside her. They would think or know that the Golem’s poison was finally starting to affect her and take her back to the Dancer’s Guild. She could not tell them,

so He fixed her eyes on the walk ahead. It was not hard with Nevaeh by her side to keep her steady. 'Almost there.' Nevaeh murmured to her softly. He nodded, her body was not tired, but a dull ache began to beat in her temples and her vision sometimes blurred out of focus if she moved her head a certain way. The quicker she got Genny and Away out the better. The quicker she got everyone she cared about to safety, the better.

'Where is everyone?' He asked as she realized that Meridian, Nevaeh, and her own were the only footsteps to be heard wandering the Palace Halls. The only sounds besides that were the

swishing of her Dancer’s skirts that Nevaeh had fetched her. It sent chills to her spine. It reminded her of her first day coming back to the Palace after the Fire.

'Don't know.' Meridian said uneasily. 'It almost reminds me of the time when the King went missing, the whole city was placed on curfew for days.' At the same moment, Nevaeh hissed for them to hurry. They did, all of them spent for the Prison’s Keep. A side staircase took them under the palace. His head ached too much to take in her surroundings. She just knew that one moment there had been sunlight pouring in through massive windows, the next

their world was under the earth with only torches and mage-light to see. Rows of cells lined the left and right side of the hallway; He did not investigate any of them. Not until she heard. 'He!' It was Genny's voice. His head snapped up towards its direction.

Genny's face peeped out from between the iron bars. Her face was covered with soot and dirt, a grim smile lighting her face. 'You're all right.' relief flooded He's chest when she heard Genny's voice. Unable to do more, He nodded. She was unable to bring herself to tell her that she did not have much time left. 'You shouldn’t have come here,

they-' He cut in before she could start to chastise her.

'Where is Away?' She demanded in a deep voice, Genny's voice stilled, her feature turning into stone. It was not hard as stone, He bet if she pushed hard enough Genny would crack to a million pieces. Conflict warred behind her dark eyes that were almost black in the sunless space. Finally, she came to a decision.

'They are trialing him today.' He paled too, beside them Nevaeh and Meridian tense. His mouth went dry, and she had to close it. There was nothing she could say. 'What!' she found her voice; it was too loud. 'What could they-'

Again, there was conflict before Genny sighed. It was a small gesture that made her tragically beautiful, and then she was shaking her head. 'They think that you and he have been having an affair.' He closed her eyes to stop the space from going from black to red. They were crazy, absolutely insane. 'He?' Genny said in a tight voice. 'Everyone knows that-'

'Get her out.' He shoved her lock picks at Nevaeh knowing she knew how to use them. She did not want to hear whatever Genny had been about to say. 'Take her straight to the Guild. I'll meet

you there.' Nevaeh stopped her eyes narrowing on her.

'No.' Nevaeh, Genny, and Meridian glared down at her. He drew herself up to full height preparing for a battle. Goddess, they did not have time for this! She was running out of time; didn't they get it?

'I’m not giving you a choice and you don’t have to come.' He tried to make her voice icy as she glared at them all. 'Go.' He ran for the exit surprised to find Meridian at her heels a moment later. Together they ran for the Council Chamber like their lives depended on it. Away's might.

Their feet were suddenly too loud and slow as they clacked on the stone floors. He burst through the ridiculously huge Council Chamber doors flanked by Meridian. As one eye turned to them, every gaze held the same expression. Shock. He glared back accusingly at the sight of her.

'What is the meaning of this!' her voice rolled through the room like quiet thunder. No one quaked in their seats, but no one moved either. Meridian put a restraining hand on His shoulder, but she violently shook him off. Anger rolled through her like magic, she wished it

were magic. She would tear the walls down around them with her anger alone.

His feet carried her down the aisle towards the lone stand. Away stood behind it, his eyes bright at the sight of her but grim at the same time. At least he looked all right, dirty but not harmed. He thought.

'Lady.' The sneering voice caught her attention; she looked up to the dais and blanched. The highest Biseal sat in the King’s Chair. He sat in She's seat!

'Biseal.' He said with as much contempt as she could sew into that one word. Goddess, she did not like this man.

'You are in my husband's seat.' She said even when her hand grabbed Away's arm. Her fury only grew when she realized that they had chained him, and his arms were bruised and his hands bloody.

'Someone had to take lead while you were,' he coughed 'absent.' Meridian said that guards had chased them when they tried to remove her from the Palace. Had the Guards been trying to stop them from hurting her, or had they been about to finish off what the Golem had started? No one seemed in any hurry to arrest Meridian and he stood right next to her. They glared at him.

'I wasn't in the best of health.' He said through gritted teeth.

'How are you feeling now?' he asked, leaning forward-looking too interested. He knew without any doubt that he was the one to send that Golem. If Meridian had been telling the truth, then he was the one that had if not started the Fire, then conspired it. Maybe even tricked the apprentices into accidentally doing the spell.

'I would be better if you didn't have my Guard in chains.' She hissed up to him. 'Come down from The King’s Chair.'

'I was voted in for this seat.'

'It was in my absence!' He hissed back.

'My Dear, a lot has changed in your absence.' He sneered. Funny how one seat could make him think he had so much power? He shook off the fact that it had made her think the same. How stupid she had been to think she was practically untouchable.

'Would you care to fill me in then?' He asked neutrally. Meridian had made his way to her side. Biseal spared him a disgusted look before turning back to her. The Lords, all of them seemed to

shift restlessly, they had come to some decision about her, and she was to be told. Now.

'The Gods sent me a vision about you my Dear of what you really are.' He said imperiously. His stomach ached; he was lying. He had to be, there was no way a magician had visions. That was done in the temples, another reason that the two were the opposite. Mages believed in magic; Priest believed in fate. He was lying his fat ass off.

'Oh, really?' He said casually, in her mind she reached for Her, her hand wrapping around her necklace. She

wanted him to hear this. 'What did they tell you?'

'That you are unfit to rule as a woman. That child in your belly is a lie fabricated to keep you here. You have played your part here fairly well Lady,' there went that sneering again. 'But I've been told you didn't share your husband's bed before you were taken to Natali. You were, however, alone often with- him.' he nodded towards Away. His jaw dropped open. She did not know whether to laugh or screech at his lies.

'Those are lies!' Meridian spoke when she found she could not. All He could truthfully see was red. The room

swayed dangerously and for a moment she was not sure if it was the poison taking hold of her finally or if it was her rage. Maybe if she screamed and lunged at him the poison would pour from her mouth and fingertips into his worthless lying form while she strangled him! Her fingers twitched to try.

'This is treason!' He shook her head, unable to stand, not being able to simply slit his throat. 'Away is a friend, a trustworthy friend that has guarded me and my reputation better than anyone in this room can boast!'

'I'm sure he guarded you,' Biseal coughed. 'Very well. Adultery of The Lady

is an act of treason as well.' Biseal said just as easily. She could not believe it. The room sat in anticipatory silence. No one was aiding Biseal in case He got the upper hand. No one wanted to lose their throat for treason. They were not going to help her either. Somehow Biseal had gotten to every member of the Court. She was on her own. Goddess she wished Alec were with her.

'You've already tried to kill my child.' He found her tongue. 'I wasn't here because I was attacked right outside of the Goddess's temple in the palace. That was black magic! Is that the will of the Goddess as well?' He sneered wondering

what he was to say. 'Or is it just your will in the God's name.'

He was so sure he had him. He did not even blink. 'A Foreigner harps of foreign tales of Black magic and Lies.' His mouth dropped. At that moment she saw all the hate that he had held back. Hate mixed with something else that made her skin shiver. Lust?

'I am not.'

'Then why are you not dead?' He asked sitting back waiting for her to amuse him. There was a murmuring agreement from the Lords. He turned to

glare at them. All but a few glared boldly back.

'Because I am a mage.' He told them, holding her head high. It was not a lie; she had a theory that it was the only reason her mind had not completely turned into meaninglessness.

'He doesn't-' Away began but He silenced him with a wave of her hand.

'Mage?' Biseal said skeptically, his beady eyes looking over her. 'I think not.'

'I know so.' He stood proud. 'I’m a Truthteller.' The room erupted into laughter. Even Biseal chuckled in his

snorting laughter. He glared at him. 'It is true,'

'Show me?' Biseal asked-

'He, don’t.' Away began. He shut him up with a glare. She was doing this for him, to get him out; he did not need to know that she was already doomed. He was not telling her not to say anything for fear of them knowing she was a mage but because he knew what she was going to say.

'I can’t,' she took a deep breath and told him. 'I haven’t felt my magic since I put out The Fire.' A rumble of comments rippled around her. Even

Meridian shot her a funny look, a skeptical one but still shocked. 'I- I don’t know when it will return.' She held up her hands in a helpless shrug that left Biseal purple. His head was purple; it reminded her of a pimple that needed to be popped. He took a step forward and was snatched back. Meridians wrapped his arm around her shoulders pulling her close to his side jostling her. He blinked, Biseal’s face was normal again. It was red, not purple and it did not look like a pimple but damn if she would not like to squish it anyway. Especially when he said.

'You’re a dirty little liar that was never for the good of Ysterym. You are

the reason the Gods have forsaken us. You are the reason our King has fled. It is… You; it has always been you!' His mouth feels open. 'You’re the Black Omen upon Ysterym. Nothing will be put right until we do it.' Behind her, there was a murmur of agreement.

'But- I,' words failed her as her knees turned weak. For once she was speechless. Instead, her hands slipped into Meridian’s pocket pulling out the picks she had begged him to find. The room fell into an eerie silence. Away just looked at her in shock. Everyone else looked nervous.

'Are you completely off your head?' She heard Meridian say with a quiver in his voice. 'She is the Queen, no matter what you think she has done. It does not make it true! There were bad omens in Ysterym long before she came and will be here long after we go to our graves. You are a fool!' He wanted to cheer. Instead, she hedged away from Meridian. He knew what he was doing and silently thanked him. This meeting had shot to hell quickly, they needed out. He slowly inched towards Away who stood in horror and rage as he looked at Biseal. Like he wanted the man’s throat.

Gods, He had never wanted anything so bad.

His hands firmly gripped Away's wrist, after she did this they had to be prepared to run. She looked at Away. He nodded; his face determined. She had to remember to tell him that Nevaeh had gotten Genny out before he went off to look for her. The picks turned in the lock with an audible click. He winced even as the shackles fell into her hands from Away's wrist.

'Seize her!' He flew backward behind the protective stances of the two men. Meridian tucked her safe against his back as he whirled around to meet the

sound of sliding swords. Despite herself, He was intrigued by them. They were different than any sword she had ever seen. The blade instead of being straight and pointed, the were sickled with a blade's edge for a tip. 'Take her in, all of them in for the use of Black magic against Ysterym and treason against the king’s name!'

'No!' He gripped Meridian's arm. She looked at Away, he did not have chains shackling him, but he was in no condition for a fight. Meridian was too exhausted to fight. He did not want to fight them. She simply wanted Biseal’s head to roll.

'There isn't another way out.' Meridian hissed. His belly rolled. She knew there wasn't.

'Do you have a weapon.' when he did nothing but look at her, He cursed before belatedly realizing she did not have a dagger on her either.

'Grab Her, get her!' The first guard charged them. He easily dodged his stupid attempt at them.

Meridian grabbed his swords as He kicked him down to the ground. Her foot rolled him over to his side. Just in time to trip the next guards charging them. Somehow Meridian fought off two,

three, until away was able to pick up the sword and help. He was tucked in close beside Meridian. Away stuck near her open side. He could not believe that their duo was fending off a troop.

It was obvious that Meridian was a sword's man he held his weapon like it was a part of his arm. Away was an assassin and held his own. Both kept their bodies in front of He as though they were her breathing armor. She watched in awe as Away stabbed a nearby guard that had tried to do the same. Rushing forward He raided him for weapon’s praying silently to the Goddess to forgive them all, and herself. She came out with a short dagger

and a sword that she was only moderately trained to use.

'Thank you.' Away easily nicked the sword out of her hand as he twirled into another fight. They were still progressively moving forward towards the huge Council doors.

'Hey-' He wished she had thought not to distract them. A trio rushed her friends at once, each taking them in a different direction. One the left, the other right, and one came at the front and center. Meridian sliced through the first one while away hacked back the second. The third rushed past them right for He, his blade aimed for her chest.

'He!' Away tried to trip the guard but was forced to engage another guard who had rushed forth. His eyes widened as her body reacted, twisting into itself. He twirled out the way slamming into Away’s side as her hand that held the dagger lashed out. She felt it connect with something hard yet soft and sink in. She squealed as the guard went down, a fresh spurt of blood flowed from a side wound. By the Goddess, they were painting the Council Room red. No one moved to interfere, to help, they were completely alone. He rubbed her head, a serious pain tingled along her spine and up into her head.

'Princess!' He jumped looking up to the dais where the King sat. She could have wept.

'She?' He nearly dropped her knife in a burst of joy at seeing him here. He would set everyone to right. By the look on his face, no one here today would pay for what they were doing.

'He waits!' He ignored Away's arms; he did not understand that they were saved. She would help them straighten this whole thing out.

He picked up her Dancer's skirts as she ran for the dais dogging around the fallen bodies of the guards. She had to

make it back to the dais where She was. He stood tall looking down at her, a grim smile spread on his face that made her want to hug him even more. She just needed to get to him.

'She!' He reached out for him as she ascended the steps. He reached for her snatching her forward with a force that made He gasp. The momentum slammed her forward into a solid chest, she could have cried out.

'Goddess, I've missed you.' He said on the verge of tears. She wanted to cry and scream. He wanted to kiss Her for coming home at last and not leaving her with this mess. She looked up into his

scowling face as he looked out at the Lords.

'I know Princess, never again I swear.' He hugged her tightly. 'Give me the dagger.' He reached for it. He hesitated.

'I-'

'Heania.' Her voice became stern. 'Give me the dagger.' His hands took it from her fingers while she tried to decide whether she should hand it to him or not.

He sputtered up at him about to give him a piece of her mind, but she was twirled around to face the Lords. Why were Away and Meridian still fighting?

Didn't they see that She was home, they could stop? Her mouth opened to yell for Away or Meridian before something sharp nicked into her neck. The world stopped, He froze, like a blade bit into her skin. It was her blade- why would She press a dagger to her throat?

'Don’t say a word or I will slice you open.' The words made her shudder at their coldness, she meant it. He was going to kill her.

'The baby-' He began-

'That bastard can die with you.' He head-butted him; it must have stunned him because She roared as he stumbled

back, the blade pressed dangerously into her neck. He gulped but must have cried out because Away and Meridian turned to her as one. Both stood stunned as she felt. What was going on?

'She?' He asked tentatively-

'No Darling,' The voice sounded like She. He shut her eyes against his words, he had told her no. He must have been telling the truth, she never called her Darling. 'Drop your weapons.' He was not speaking to her; He guessed he spoke to Away and Meridian. She winced when both did so without hesitation.

'Don’t you hurt her.' Meridian stated through clenched teeth as if that would somehow remove the blade from her throat.

'I cannot hurt the dying.' She heard a soft murmur in her ear. It made her shudder. 'You are dying aren’t you Darling?' He wanted to shake her head but ended up just shaking, period. It earned her a cruel laugh. 'Seize them!'

'No!' His words broke through her haze. This was not happening, not again. Please Goddess let this be some horrible dream. He prayed with her eyes wide open as she lunged forward the blade sliced into her throat creating a

shallow cut. He barely noticed the hot slice of pain. 'Let them go! Please!' Guards rushed the two men; she saw their weapons being kicked out of grabbing distance. Two guards stood on either side of Away and Meridian as they tied her friend’s hands behind their backs. This could not be happening, but it was. She was letting this happen- he was doing it! He thought fast.

'You can’t.' He started louder and more confident than she could have ever thought possible.

'Away is under diplomatic immunity, if you touch him, you risk a war with Natili. We cannot afford a new ally to

become an old foe. It is not Meridian’s fault, I threatened to take away his land and title if he did not help me. You have no reason to hold them here, banish them and be done with it.' She frowned but shrugged.

'If you keep fighting to get her not only, will I kill her outright, but you will also both hangs.' Both men stopped their advancement. The room rustled finally; the Lords broke out into wild murmuring. He would outrightly kill the Queen. He heard bits or what they were saying. 'Still, she might be telling the truth, there might be a child.' She turned them out again to favor Meridian and

Away who was eying her stubbornly. If they stayed any longer, they would do something rash that would get them killed. They had to go.

'Go my Lords; you’re both dismissed from my service.' He said as Queen as she could. Her legs felt as though they would buckle, her whole body just wanted to explode from frustration and anger. This was unfair, it was not right, it- a flash of pure hit struck her body, and she felt her magic boil up out of pure frustration. He reached for it desperately only to feel it retreat. Frustrated tears pricked her eyes, she blinked them away quickly.

Neither of the men moved. He frowned. 'Guards!' She called while pleading with them both. 'See that Lord Away and Lord Meridian make it safely outside the palace walls.' She said watching more guards come forward to flank them. 'No harm will come to them.' He said as menacingly as possible.

'No harm will come to them.' The guard, the lead guard, decided when he took a stance before her. His eyes glittered with a look He did not understand, anger? Was he angry that he had to obey her? His lips were pinched tight as he gave a curt nod to his team. Meridian and away were dragged from

the room. He winced when they struggled.

Two weeks had passed and Jannie's lethargy seemed to worsen. She could not seem to decipher her feelings regarding Welford or Ansley. The only feelings she truly trusted were those she felt for the babe. She knew she should return to Herndon Hall, but she seemed unable to work up the energy needed to order the servants.

With her elbow resting on the sill, and her chin propped in her hand, she sat at the window in her bedchamber gazing out at what she could see of Rockville at night. Which was not much. Trees blocked

her view of the street. She saw the lighted drive but knew it would still be empty. The Duchess of Greystone was hosting a ball this evening. It was always well attended, so Jannie knew no one would call this evening.

Following the interment, the men returned to the residence. Adhering to the custom that women did not attend funerals, the society matrons waited with Jannie in the front parlor. As Ansley passed by on his way to taking the men to the library for libations, he caught sight of Jannie with women sitting around her, his mother holding her hand. Her pale pallor concerned him. He wanted to lift

her into his arms and carry her upstairs to her bedchamber, away from the madness.

Instead, he pushed forth to the library, where footmen had already begun pouring drinks for the guests. When all had a glass in hand, Ansley lifted his and an expectant hush filled the room.

To Welford. He was courageous in all things, met all of life's challenges head-on. You will be missed, old friend. hear! Hear!

As Ansley downed the whiskey, Lord Sheffield said, at least we can all be assured that there will be fox hunting

when we join him. I daresay, he will see to it that all is put to rights in that regard.

Another toast followed, more whiskey was swallowed, and quiet conversation and laughter ensued as the men began to reminisce about Welford. Ansley wandered over to where Westcliffe and Stephen were talking. Now that he knew the truth of their parentage, it amazed him that he had not suspected before. Westcliffe was dark-haired, like his sire, and Stephen was blond, fair as a summer afternoon. Westcliffe's eyes were deep Black, almost black, and Stephen's was blue with lines within.

The arrangements for Welford were nicely made, Stephen said quietly.

Ansley nodded, distracted by the man he had spotted nearby talking with Lord Sheffield. Do my eyes deceive me or is that my cousin Green Demure talking with Sheffield?

Both his brothers looked discreetly in the direction Ansley had shown. I would say so, yes, Westcliffe murmured. he is next in line for Welford's title, isn't he? quiet. Does he look to be a man going mad with syphilis?

Westcliffe and Stephen both looked at him as though he were the one

going mad. Had Welford lied about that as well? Damn him! The man was turning out to be an expert manipulator. I think I will have a word. But getting there meant running the gauntlet of those who wished to offer their condolences. It was no secret that he and Welford had been close. So, he graciously acknowledged the kind words that were spoken as he wended his way toward his target. He was not there when he heard Sheffield say, …bated breath to discover if Lady Welford would deliver a son.

I do not know if the courts will care one way or the other. My cousin was paralyzed. If he gets her with a child, I

will eat my hat. shall I fetch it for you? Ansley asked.

Grean jerked around so quickly that the whiskey in his glass nearly sloshed over the sides.

cousin. You are not on the branch of the tree that is in line for the title so perhaps you have not given it any thought. But you have. If you are wise, you will hold your tongue on the matter. Is that a threat? It is a promise. Lady Welford has suffered enough during the past few years, and she deeply mourns the passing of her husband. That does not mean he got her with a child. I have heard rumors that you danced with her, that you

were seen walking alone with her in the garden. As a favor to Welford, I attended to her where he could not. does that include her bed?

His fist shot up so fast that the pain was ricocheting from his knuckles to his shoulder before he even realized he had delivered the blow to Grean's chin. His cousin dropped to the floor with an unceremonious thud. Completely out. He was not going to get up any time soon.

Westcliffe and Stephen were instantly at Ansley's side.

The room was closing in. If she reached out both her hands, she could

push them apart. He clenched her easily at her side pushing away the crazy thoughts. The walls were not closing in, it was all in her head.

'Lady?' He shook her head, staring off Aisling's advance to help. The woman missed nothing and the way He had been glaring at her confines was not missed. She just could not help it, she refused to go back to sleep. Not while Genny and Away sat in the Purgatory, goddess this was such a mess. Worse, all of this was her fault.

'I need a favor, Aisling-' He licked her lips wishing she could think of

another way. 'You're a healer in the palace, but you're a Dancer.'

'It isn't officially known that I'm a Dancer.' Aisling said warily. He paused that made sense. In the palace Dancers were not particularly trusted. It was for the best that it was not known that Aisling was one.

'Are there other dancers in the palace, ones that I don't know of?' He asked unsurely. There had to be, she refused to believe that the Guild would be content to sit in the eyes of the palace and not have spies looking out for Her or for the Guild itself.

'There are a few I know and a lot more I don't.' Aisling had been hard at work writing down something in her small book. Her pen stroked in fast scrawls across the sheet until He looked away afraid that she would lose her focus and slip away into another nightmare. 'I will see what I can find out for you.' She watched Aisling stand and walk to the exit.

He shivered; she could withstand a lot of things but not another nightmare. Thank the Goddess that she had her sanity, for now. After the last dream, He was not sure how she could trust it anymore. What if this was a dream too?

She could not take falling in and out of dreams, maybe if she pinched herself- ouch! Well, it hurt like this was real.

'Lady?' Aisling's concerned tone crept in on her musing. He quickly hid her arm where her pinch already started to bruise.

'Can you contact someone?' He asked quickly. 'I want to know what is going on.' She needed to get Aisling away from her too.

'I cannot-'

'What of Monroe then?' He asked, trying to find something to get her. Aisling's face clouded, telling her all she

needed to know. There was something between Monroe and Aisling, a friendship hopefully.

'I don't want him there alone- my protection for him means nothing if I'm not there to enforce it.' Aisling frowned.

'You and the heir are more important.' Aisling said bravely, He wanted to shake her.

'Aisling, we're dying!' she hated to see the healer flinch. 'You said it yourself- nothing can be done but to wait for lucidity to leave me, from the inside, out, right? I want the people I care about to be safe, please.' She knew she had the

healer when her shoulders drooped. Her formidable form shook in deep tremors. He rushed quickly to hug her, she hated being so harsh. So blunt. 'Please?' She begged.

It felt like an eternity passed before Aisling sighed, it said everything she wanted to know. 'Thank you!' He hugged her tightly.

'I'll be back before noon,' Aisling said briskly pulling away. 'You're not to leave this room.'

'Yes,' He nodded crossing her fingers behind her back as if she were a child. They used to pull this when they

were children. Crises crossed my lies got lost.' she muttered over her shoulder. She knew that it was still early morning before the sun had even stirred. There was time yet she just had to- 'Princess?' He jumped at the voice as if her very thoughts had summoned this phantom voice.

'Oh, thank the Goddess!' The voice was exuberant. It was also defiantly male. He wanted to cry; the poison was setting in early. She was becoming delusional. By the stars, she was sitting in a cell with a babysitter thinking that her husband was speaking to her.

'But I am speaking to you Heania.' Her voice said happily. 'My Heania.' he added in an afterthought.

'Gods are too cruel.' He said slumping down onto her bed. Aisling gave her one more stern stare before departing from the room. He sighed watching her form leave. She had been making the feeling so much worse. She was sitting in a cell waiting to die, just brooding. He curled up into herself to stare at the wall with the flickering flames. 'I see you in Her arms, now I'm hearing you-'

'Of course, you hear me, you're wearing the talisman I gave you. He doesn't you remember?' His hands flew

into her shirt feeling for the signet resting against her breast. Her fingers clutched it so hard she felt its imprint embedding into her skin.

'I didn't.' She admitted solemnly.

'It doesn't matter- I heard you scream. He you made my heart stop.' Her voice became tight. 'Where are you?' his questions came in a tirade that demanded answers. He took a deep breath, she could just see him sitting, his leg shaking with impatience as he forced everything else to stay still. She smiled.

'I'm in the Guild, Nevaeh, Aisling, Genny, and Away smuggled me out. Meridian did as well.'

'I'm so glad.' he sounded so glad. 'You and the baby are safe.' for now.

'Yes,' He wheedled, she had to tell him the truth, but she was reluctant to intrude upon his happiness. 'Genny and Away were caught and taken to the purgatory.'

'For keeping you safe?' He said clearly, believing that she was wrong. She wished that she was wrong.

'The Golemn got me.' she could not spare him that detail. 'They found me

outside the temples and tried to get me out- I think someone alerted the Guards because they thought I was being kidnapped. Everyone that saved me is a traitor of the Crown.' The Median was going to explode when they heard this tomorrow. The Queen had disappeared not once but twice.

'It spoke your name?' She spoke when it became impossible to stay silent.

'Yes.' He shook, remembering the bleakness of the whole thing. 'It pierced my chest. She said, 'I'm not going to make it that long, the words caught in her throat. Instead, she said. 'I need your help.' she told him after a moment after

she realized she could not say the stuff in the middle.

'I'm on my way home, Princess I swear to you-'

'I need Mican's help- She we aren't strong enough to fight this.' His voice tightened. 'Goddess I don't even have my magic to help me-' He stopped mid-speech a thought in her mind forming that was so ridiculous that it might work. 'She, did Mican get that necklace off?'

'No.' he was firm. He did not care, one way or another he was coming home.

'Do you think he could do a spell that would give me my magic back?' She asked slowly, there was a pause in the air that told her that he had stopped whatever task he had been doing. 'She I feel like such a fool.' This had to be the answer, it had been there the whole time.

'I will ask him but enough is enough, I will be home within two days.' It took five on horseback to reach Median from the Bud border. That was without a raiding party and with a fast horse.

'The Golemn's poison will set in by high noon. I have a lot to do between now and then.' He frowned; she had a couple of hours. Half a day at most. She

would not leave her friends in the Purgatory; she would not allow Meridian's name to be tarnished. 'Aisling told me if I am lucky then high noon is it.'

'I'll ask Mican, He I'll be home before anything else happens to you. Just rest, when you open your eyes, I'll be home.' He wanted to argue that the last time she closed her eyes she dreamed that Nevaeh had taken her place. She could not get those words out either.

'That sounds lovely.' He said instead of forcing cheerfulness she did not feel. Her whole body was strung tight but numb to all pain. Being told she had

less than a day to set everything to the right went beyond everything.

'It's true. I'll be home in no time, with a cure.' He was sure there was nothing for her to do but believe him. He sounded so confident; it was more to assure her than anything.

'I believe you.' He said softly.

'Good so I want my girls to just rest until I get back, swear.' he demanded her.

'I'm not a Truth-teller anymore.' He smiled a bit. 'And stop calling it a girl.' she snapped because she had to. Not

letting She have his way on everything was a luxurious pleasure.

'I don't care- don't take on everything by yourself when you don't have to. Let the Guild take care of you. u she is her because that is the way it is. Get used to it Love.' He made a face knowing arguing now was futile.

'They take care of me because- of you.' He shook her head surprised to hear Her snort.

'They would kill me to save you, He. Haven't you heard the stories going on about you? The Dancer's Queen. The Queen that builds her city with her

people, the stories that have reached about you are inspiring.' the awe in She's voice dumbfounded her. She had barely been out of her room since it was discovered she was pregnant. 'Those people care about you because they love you.' so there, deal with it, you are loved.

He clenched her jaw unsure how to deal with what he was telling her. 'I don't know how to feel about that, I'll worry about it later- She I need your help for something else now.' He sketched out her half-formed plan of how she planned to get Genny and Away out of Purgatory. Aisling might have known people in the Guild but there was no way to know if any

of them could help. There was not any time to wait or lose, she had till noon.

She listened to her, heard her out before he told her what he knew. 'Why do you need to know?'

'So-o, I can give the information to someone to help get them out.' He told him easily. It was only a half-lie. He did not have to know that she had every intention of breaking them out.

-And-

After another tight silence, she told her the rest of everything she needed to know. Including a secret way of escaping out of the Guild. She felt

horrible by the end. When he made her promise not to do anything stupid, she had to do another Crisscrossed lie that got lost. She told him that she would not. Their goodbye was and 'I love you.' She would never see him again if she could not stop the poison. It was all on her.

'Lady?' He jumped a small smile lit her face as she saw Nevaeh take hesitant steps toward her, Meridian a couple behind her. Both looked so tired He wanted to shove them into the nearest seat.

'Sit, sit.' He waved them into seats if she was going to do this, she needed their help. Even Meridian's if he

had helped her out the Guild then maybe she had been wrong in suspecting him all along, Nevaeh too. The two of them had been unconsciously high on her list of suspects even though she and Nevaeh had become close friends. At least she had not had to track them down, they had come to her.

'Lady.' Meridian nodded cautiously, his normally smooth face was handsome and clean cut. Right then he just looked so exhausted. He wanted nothing more but to give him her blanket and tell him to rest. 'Forgive me for not getting to you sooner.' His brows knitted

together in confusion. Her face was the mirror of Nevaeh's.

'I don't-'

'I should have warned you sooner and I did not for that I am sorry'

'Meridian.' He said slowly unsure what she could say. 'Be blunt with me.' She liked to blunt it did not give her time to be filled with dread, doom or despair. It all just hit at once leaving you to catch up.

His face twisted as though he would be sick before stealing into weary features. 'I've known this was going to happen- not that you were going to be attacked that night, but I knew it was to

come.' so they had been plotting her attack for some time? He had to have seen it coming, she had and ignored it. It had been stupid to deny that it could happen. She had been foolish now this was the price.

'Are you telling me now because you know the price for treason? Or because you think it won't matter?' She would be dead by noon high without her magic, it was the only thing that she was assured.

'I know what treason means.' He said stiffly. 'And you do matter, your life matters to me and it was foolish to think I could stave off your attack like I did.' He

did not know if she believed him or not. He could just be telling her this now so she would see that he had mercy. Or he could be telling the truth. 'I've seen what you've done even with everyone trying to hinder you, myself included.' He and Nevaeh exchanged glances. 'I would like to see what other changes you can make.'

'Even though I'm a woman?' He could not help her sarcasm. From the first she had met Meridian he had not done anything to hide what he thought of a woman's capabilities.

'It's a pleasure to say I've met a few exceptions to my philosophy. I want everything you can offer Median for

Defama.' the spoke of his lands. He wanted to ask what made him think he would be allowed to keep them but did not feel sure enough to taunt him in that way.

'Tell me everything.' He sat forth; Meridian's eyes widened when he realized she was dressed in a simple shift- a nightdress. His eyes quickly glanced away. He snorted; the women of Ysterym wore less going about their daily routines. What made her so different?

'There is a lot to confess Lady.' He said simply. She had to ask then, fine.

'Who started the fire?' That was the most important. If she did nothing else before she died, she wanted whoever did it dead.

'The University.' Meridian spoke without hesitation. He sat back stung. So, he knew, he had truly known all this time!

'I've only just found out about it through the ears I have, just like everyone else.' He said quickly.

'You should be shamed!' He snapped. 'Goddess do you know how many people died! Homes and families that need justice-' He looked away disgusted only to turn back to him with a

glare. 'That's inexcusable!' At least he had the decency to look ashamed. 'Why?' why was the city burned, there was not a good enough reason for it, but she had to know.

'Ysterym is a delicate balance of powers, Lady.' Meridian murmured. 'The Gods temples, the Crown, the Guilds. As King, she represented all.' He frowned. 'He is the Crown as king, the king is appointed by the Gods, and he is a known figure head in all of the main Guilds. He is all.'

'Where does that leave the University?' Nevaeh asked curiously. It was the first time she had spoken in a while.

'Don't be fooled lady,' Meridian spoke to Nevaeh but did not look up. 'The University is a Guild too; they just choose to distance themselves. The Temples could be considered Guilds...but since it is the Gods, they are separate.' He nodded still confused. 'The University feels superior because they have magic. A gift given to them by no other than the Gods- they think they are gods. That is what rumors are saying. Biseal believes he is a godly deity.' Meridian's voice held as much contempt for the man as He felt. 'He had even been an advisor to King She, he was restationed a season before you came into our court Lady.' He jumped,

which surprised her. She would have thought Biseal was too high and mighty but then the position did suit him. He would be in power to influence a King. He would never turn that down.

'Why did he step down?' he asked curiously.

'Oh, he didn't. King She...retired him.'

'Why would he do that?' He asked, she knew she knew nothing but now was her chance to snatch answers. She had to take it. Even when it was taking up her precious time.

'Because Biseal didn't want the Crown to be tainted with foreign blood.' He rocked back as though she had been slapped or kicked. She could have thought of multiple things but never that.

'I remember something like that.' Nevaeh frowned looking at He. 'She threw him out the door, literally. Nothing was going to change his mind about bringing you here.' He waited to hear traces of resentment and found none. Nevaeh looked at her in open honesty. 'I forgot about that He, I'm sorry. I know that being dismissed did not sit well with Biseal. He's been known to have a temper.' Meridian nodded.

Shaking her head, she wanted Meridian to tell her more. He was spellbound as she listened in horror to what he said next. 'It started the moment She disappeared. You could just feel it stirring. The University started chirping about the displeasure the Gods had for the King for taking a foreign wife- one with no power to match his own at that.' His eyes shut but she listened on.

'The fact that you didn't carry his brand didn't help. They insisted the Gods were not pleased. The Temples were not swayed to believe what the University said. The Danceer's Guild was quick defending you both. When you both went

missing it became increasingly hard to leave the Gods out of it. You were gone for so long it was hard to tell what rumors the cities were and what the University started.' What Biseal started. He thought icily.

'We all tried to ignore it, but we couldn't when the fire started.' Meridian's words did not sit right with her. Someone had to have known something. Fires did not just start, they were set. 'We didn't know anything about it until we heard it roaring.' By then no one could have stopped it, it burned wild and free untamed, unchecked. Only by divine interference.

'By then there was nothing you could have done.' He said numbly. 'By the time I made it back Median was blazing- nothing would have helped.' except her magic. He thought he was feeling sick. If she and she had returned a moment or worse a day later, so much more would have been lost.'

'Except the divine power the Gods bestowed upon the University.' Nevaeh's voice was faint. He spared her a glance, finding her flushed with her lips pinched tight in anger. He wondered if she looked similar, about to burst into anger.

'Of course, they would have been there to pick up the pieces- to save the day.' Meridian said with disgust. Again, He could not tell if he was faking it. He was still trying to claim what was not his or anyone is except Her's. Did he think he could get a crown out of this, by telling her?

A grim smile touched his lips and finally, he looked up at her. He found no comfort. 'Then you came back, out of the smoke. Out of nowhere you come in and your Guardian roars fear back into everyone's hearts. Making demands- without your husband.' He chuckled a little. 'You were a remarkable sight, when

you announced you were pregnant- with all the healers backing your claim. There was no chance of dethroning you- everyone knew it.' Biseal knew it too. He did not want foreign blood mixing with the Crown, you and She having a baby was his worst dream come true.

'So, they sent the Golemn to attack me?' He asked incredulously.

'Attack you- and the child.' He agreed. 'I can't say it was the University who sent it Lady, there are a lot of people, powerful people who wish to see you dead.' He flinched. 'There are a lot of people who feel the same way Biseal

does.' that bloodlines should not be mixed.

'Well, if you are finding-up with being against me,' He licked her lips trying to find a way to effectively bottled up her anger. 'I want you to help me.'

'I was always-' He raised a hand, and he went quiet.

'You didn't immediately come forth, you waited until it was too late.' she told him. 'I nearly died, that is against me!' her voice turned hard as it rose higher. 'Now, are you going to help me or are you going to stay here and explain to Aisling and the Elders where I've gone.'

Meridian did not miss a moment. 'I'll follow you.' She turned to Nevaeh who was fighting her own battle with her anger.

'I'm with you.' she said, her deep brown gaze burned into He's sight and she looked away. They were both too angry for words.

He nodded relieved. She had hoped they would say that. 'Good, here is what I need you two to do.'

~*~

Honor told her the coast was clear, after a day of resting and endless fussing and snarling (the latter on Ham’s

part.) the other women had finally taken pity on her. As well they should. Alec grumbled but did not try to keep her confined.

He slipped out of her room and went away. She was free for the first time in what felt like forever. Free of the constant fussing and naps and growls for her to wake and eat when all she wanted to do was sleep through oblivion. Someone was always with her, mostly Her growling at her to not even think about making a run for the door. She would not dream of it she knew he had locked it.

-And-

When she woke for the first time truly, she had not been there like before. It was for the best; he was always arguing with her about eating or drinking. What did it matter, there were people outside these walls that had not had a meal in days?

He headed in the direction Alec had sent her, this time with him at her heels. Towards the little room that led out into the city, she was going to visit the temples again and see if she could snoop around the palace grounds a little more.

He turned around the last corner so lost in thought she smacked into a wall. 'Where are you going?' He cursed; it

was worse than a wall. It was the Heir’s chest.

She stood walking with another man Him did not recognize. He was tall and young-looking.

Possibly a few years older than she was. His hair was red Him marveled at it. She liked him instantly. 'Himalia, this is Unsway. An old friend of mine. We trained together.' He nodded smiling up at the other man, she got distracted by his smile. It was handsome and sweet. Herr’s arms snaked around her and did not let go.

'Now back to what I was asking earlier.' He tugged her. 'Where were you are going?'

'Out.' she moved around him only to be snagged and two men blocking her way. He growled. He growled back, then Alec growled hissing for them all to back away from her. Anyway, tumbled over himself to put distance between them. She did not move.

'Not so fast Love, Mara wants to speak to you and a couple of the Elders are eager to meet you.'

Planting her feet, Him looked between the two men. 'Why is that?' She

should have known he would never let her keep her balance. When he tugged, she flew forward, his head rested on top of hers. 'Because you are the only one who has been outside these walls in days. you my insolent one is the only one who has been to the palace.' he chewed on that. He felt him growl in disapproval. 'They want to speak to the woman who stopped the fire?' Ham’s gut twisted; she had not felt her magic since.

Instead, she turned in Herr’s grip to Unsway surprised to find him watching them. A bemused look plastered to his face. Her face felt hot from the temple to

below her chin. When she ducked her head, he chuckled.

'It isn’t as though I know more than they do.' He grumbled upset that she had gotten flustered. She took her hand and began the walk.

'I have no doubt, but they shall not tell me a thing until they know how you are doing. They want you to sit in on these meetings.'

'Are you using me?' She glared at her husband when he did not answer she turned to him anyway. 'Doesn't it sound like he is using me?'

'Yep.' Anyway, dodged Herr’s swing, dancing out of the way delicately.

'Don't be mean to him.' He chastises. 'So, you really need me.' her smile grew as she watched Her pale and shuffle away from her. 'I like them already.' He told Her feeling smug. Finally, people who knew how it should be. She seriously needed to follow the lead on this. Beside them, Unsway chuckled under his breath. He could not help but look at him again. He was tall, a little shorter than Her. Lean and corded with tightly compressed muscle he showed off unintentionally. Like Her, he

wore nothing but the customary Dancer’s vest and long pants and sandals.

His footsteps were never heard, ever. He wonders how much practice it took to walk without sound. She and unsway made it look so graceful, simple even. One dancer to her left and one to her right. He had an escort down the halls to wherever they decided to take her.

'Where is everyone?' He asked, feeling the coolness of the hall's snake over her skin. She never saw anyone in the halls. On rare occasions, she came across one or two, they were always quick on their way.

'Most of them left.' Anyway, murmured down to her.

'Why would they do that?'

'The fire scared many of them. Others have family they wished to go check on, they will be back. Others were sent to send word to the other Guilds. This location is not a large one, there were never many of us here to begin with. Six dozen at one time at most. Except during celebrations and holidays.'

He nodded. 'Why didn't the fire scare you away?' He glanced down at her, wondering why she was asking so many questions. He did not seem bothered by

it; she would keep asking even after he was.

'Do you think I frighten easily?' He stood tall and bold, puffing out his chest as they continued down the hall.

'He's shyer than a mouse.' She interjected.

'Am not!' Anyway, she glared over her head.

'You nearly peed yourself over him.' He jerked his thumb at Alec trailing at Ham’s heels. Anyway, I looked down and shuddered.

'Braver men would have soiled themselves trying to get away from that-'

'Alec.' He put in gently. 'His name is Alec.'

Anyway, nodded, winking at her. 'To get away from Alec.' He nodded and they walked on.

'Him!' Mara was the first to greet her, the older woman walked forward to greet them the instant they stepped into the room. The older woman's arms wrapped around Him pulling her away from Her and she found herself clasping her back. In the short while she was in the man Mystery guild, she liked the Mara. The small woman was stronger than she looked, and much sharper tongued than her sweet appearance let

on. Her silver rope of hair was a deception and her small from was all show.

'Mara.' He let go but Mara held tight to her shoulders pushing her back.

'You look different.' she mussed; He watched the calculations run through the back of her dark eyes. 'Happier.'

He did not know what to tell her, she was incredibly happy. It had been until she came back here to find cinder instead of houses. 'What is going on?' He remembered that there were more people in the room beside them. They stood at Mara's back patiently waiting. He noted

there were two women and one man. The Elders.

One woman was a native, the other two she could not place.

'We were hoping you would be able to shed a small light on that.' the native woman closest to Mara came forward. She was tall and slender, age lines etched into her face, and the hand she extended in greeting. He took it marveling at how her skin glowed in the mage light.

'Princess, the is Dawn.' She easily stepped in. 'Dawn is an Elder of the Guild here in Median.'

He said this with obvious pride. Do not be fooled by the Nana facade was what He got out of his words.

'Dawn this is Queen Himalia, my wife.' He again marveled at how much pride he said that with. He had never spoken of her like that before, she liked it.

Sharp brown eyes cut her attention back to the woman in front of her. He was right, He tried not to squirm under the barely had scrutiny. Beside her, Alec growled pressing himself to her knee.

'We've heard a lot about you.' Dawn finally smiled, changing her face

completely. The last two elders stepped forward.

'Mara loves to talk about you and you're singing.' The man raised his hand, and He took it. He was stocky and packed in a way that should have made his movement heavy. They did not, he was just as graceful as any dancer. He did not smile like Dawn and Mara were. He did not try to hide his scrutiny. 'Is it true you fell off the stage?' She winces.

She saved her from answering. 'Him, this is Sheldon and Neelan of Median-'

'Formerly of Rockville.' Neelan put in. He nodded, that explained it.

Neelan was tall too. Taller than Sheldon by several inches, her eyes were brown and doe-like. She sucked a lot of people in that way. 'Welcome.' He nodded.

'Nice to meet you all.'

'Enough formality.' Mara waved them off. 'Merry met my sister.' they all moved away settling on the pillows circling the room. He was alone standing in a room of Elders.

Alec purred, rubbing against her leg before a warm presence pulled her

back. Anyway, nudged her shoulder before settling onto a pillow. That left one for them. He settles in letting Her draw her back into his lap. Without thinking about it He tapped at his mental barriers. He let her in. Does this mean you aren't made with me anymore?' He did not answer her, not right away. He never spoke, his mind felt like a hand caressing over her own. Soft and intimate, warm-

Sheldon cleared his throat. Four elders, Unsway and Alec, all watched them. All amused.

'Pay attention.' Alec flopped down at her thigh laying his head-on Uway’s

lap. The man tensed but reached his hand out to stroke her kit's head.

'Start from the beginning.' Mara encouraged. He did, describing all that she could remember about being taken to what happens in Kraal to how they got out. No one so much as blinked when she told them of walking through an iron gate and turning invisible. When He got to the fire it all changed.

'That was you!' Neelan squeaked. He ducked her head hiding behind her hair.

'I’m not sure.' she told them. 'Maybe.'

'It was.' everyone turned to Her who had not spoken since He had taken up telling the tale.

'Himalia can do things. she has power over words.' he squeezed her hand. 'At first I thought she was a truth teller too- or just a seer.' all four elders nodded. 'But when she lied, such as in the tower she spoke it and it became the truth.'

He ducked her head away from everyone not liking the way they studied her as one would study a fascinating piece of art. 'What are you trying to say?' Anyway, lean forward toward them.

'That somehow her will out ceded the truth. She is a binder not a seer.'

Ham’s mouth gaped. 'Binder?' Neel scooted forward. Dawn tilted her head. 'There hasn’t been one of those in my lifetime. possibly centuries.'

He shrugged. 'Sorry.' he mouthed to her. He better- be.

'Why didn't you tell me?'

'I wasn’t sure. Don’t be upset.'

He ignored him. 'How are you so sure now?'

'You stopped that fire and it is better to come to terms with it now. You are a truth binder.'

'Can you show us?' Mara asks. Ham’s chest squeezed.

'I haven’t felt my magic since the fire.'

Sheldon nodded. 'You overexerted yourself' He was so confident and graceful He could not help but like him. 'It will come back.'

'Hope so.' She squeezed her hand.

'I do as well.' Mara agrees. 'It sounds as though you will be needing it.'

He wanted to tell them that they were the ones in more danger than she was. Neelan spoke before she could.

'I agree, just what is going on up there.' as one they all turned to Him.

No one in the room knew but they all had a feeling. 'We need to get back there.' She told them.

'You aren’t going anywhere.' He interjected. 'Not with this, she tugged the chain around his neck. 'You aren’t.' If her hunch were right, he would be arrested on sight, something was going on in the palace she could feel it.

'What are you suggesting?' Dawn asked.

'I don’t know but I know who started all this.' He gripped her shirt. 'It is all speculation of course.' They all nodded. Of course, 'none of Heir’s court is...brave enough, to do this. few of them have the brain for it.

Her frown. 'I left Nevaeh as my ear; she should have reported to me.'

'How is she going to do that?'

'She has a talisman.' He frowns; he had never told her that. Did they speak at all?

'She hasn’t contacted me at all.' They all shifted under his rising anger, except Him.

'Do you think she could be behind this?'

He did not say anything, Sheldon did. 'You think a woman did this?' He ignored the hostile glares of the four women. 'Oh, calm down.' he growled when Neelan poked him. He jumped when she growled back. 'All I meant was there is no way a woman would be given enough influence to do this sort of thing.'

'Who says she was its front runner and face.' He mussed to all. 'There

are a lot of men that would do that and let someone else control the mind of everything. You know a man with all the looks and no mind.'

'Have you ever met a man with a mind?' Mara, a fallen angel on earth, teased the three in the room. He laughed. Angels never really change look at me with my 105 years.

'It is my misfortune to know several.' she blushed when unsway winked at her. 'I must agree it is irritating when they try to make sense of impossibilities.' Herr’s lips quirked up. 'But do you see my point?'

Sheldon pursed his lips. 'We do.'

'That is why I think I should be the one to go back.' He volunteers before they produce anything else. He shot her a look, but the idea stayed in the air. 'I'll go back and report to you- as often as I can.'

'Him-'

'We need information.' He rounded him knowing that tone of voice. He was going to try and get fussy with her again. 'Did you know that they have people thinking the Gods are behind all of this. That they are displeased!' Everyone winced. 'I'm going.'

'Not without me.' He sat up straighter, He poked him back placing her hand on top of the necklace.

'No, you are not.' He had no magic, but he could shift. If they were placed upwards, it would put them in hellfire. It was not happening.

'Besides.' She went on. 'They would arrest you on sight.'

'For what?' He blinked. 'I was kidnapped!'

'Who do you think helped with that abduction?' he raised a brow. He cursed. She was not the only one who had thought that way. Her abductors had

helped to get in and get her out of the palace. 'This is good-I think.' Neelan chimed in. Everyone turned to her. 'It isn’t very old- a few decades. There was an assassination- yes on the king and queen and his father. There was no heir but his brother.' He winced she knew where the woman was going, and it was not going to help. Neelan went on. 'Instead of the brother being named heir, the brother’s wife was going to be crowned Queen-'

'Because she was beloved by the people, and they thought the brother was cold and heartless. He loved women and to gamble with the treasury.' He

interjected pressing into Herr’s back to stop his trembling. 'We know the story.'

Neelan beamed; didn't she see how upset this was making Her? 'You know this story?'

He answered but was cut off by Her- 'Yes.'

'The story is of my mother', She interjected. He squirmed in his lap. His body was trembling. Only family and close friends knew the true story of Queen Chiara.

'The Ask Queen?' Sheldon frowned. 'It can’t be the same girl- her hair was-'

'Black.' He nodded. 'Anything is possible when the Gods are involved.' He shuddered. 'My mother’s life wasn’t always a. happy one. Her uncle married her off to a foreign prince, the older Mystery prince. He was so sure that she would be Queen that he did not care about the rumors that surrounded the man he was marrying her to. He was cold, and the wife he had before died under mysterious circumstances.' He wrapped his arms around her, He relaxed sinking back wishing she could do more to comfort him. This was the story, the only story, He had ever seen Rakish get upset over.

'Instead, the King crowned his younger son heir', Him squirmed under the pressure of Heir's hands.

'Both King and heir soon met their ends one by poison and the other by arrow.'

Every person in the room sat in silence under Herr’s words. Even Alec prompts his head-on Uway’s knee to listen. He slipped under Herr’s mental barriers. 'I can take it from here.' she knew this story as well as She did.

He ignored her. 'The oldest son, Tyrel, was furious that his wife had been given what he considered his birthright,

but he couldn’t do anything of it. She was pregnant and if anything happened to her there would be a cry of civil war for the throne. For action.'

The room sways. 'She was a good leader, the people loved her, but her husband couldn’t take it. He beat her, she hit her head, and everyone thought she was dead. They sent her out down the Your river, it leads straight Rockville Pennsylvania, right thought one of the portholes from this demotion of a world to yours.'

'She stops.'

Ham’s hand shook his shoulder. He hated talking about this, he hated this story because he hated the man who did that to his mother. He hated that his mother confided in him that she still has flashbacks.

He looked down at her, she pleaded silently for him to stop. He sagged and finally did.

'She did a lot of good.' Mara agrees. 'She passed a law; it is buried under years of neglect, but it is there. A woman can rule in her husband’s absence.'

He nodded. She had read about that but there was something else, something was missing from that law. She bit her lip. It could just be something trivial. 'Then I can use that.' 'Let us not be rash, the rash get killed.' Sheldon raised a hand from his pillow. 'You are too smart.' He snorted.

'Sheldon must not remember the bit about you impromptu with the Natali king?'

'Probably not.' He grinned. 'And that wasn’t rash.'

'Besides.' She cut in. 'We aren’t sending you there alone at all.' He was a

friend of her mind and a traitor to the public.

'Who says I'll be alone.' he asks. 'Alec will be with me.' To show him, Alec yarned, baring all his teeth before flopping down in Uway's lap again.

'He wants you to scratch him.' He told Unsway helpfully.

'Ferocious indeed.' He nodded. 'It isn't enough.'

'We have time to think about it.' Neelan stood. 'Let us all think about it.'

He wanted to scream; they did not have time. There was no time left

once the fire burned Median. They were out of time, they needed to act.

A hand took hers. 'Sleep on it.' Mara patted her hand. Sheldon and Dawn nodded. They would think it was best.

'Well good night.' Dawn did a graceful curtsey. He was stumped. I could not be nightfall already. No! She had hoped to be able to sneak away to the temples for a little while and relieve Rue a little.

The Elders were first, she Her, Unsway and Alec brought up the rear. The four Elders were in deep conversation ahead of them. The three of

them barely spoke until Unsway veered away. 'Night all.' He waved back at him, and he disappeared.

She detoured them off into the right hall and she could no longer hear the mumbling of anything. 'Where are we going?'

'To our room.'

'He is right, we sleep down here.' Alec padded ahead. 'Mate is sleepy.' She was the only one in the group who was directionally challenged.

What did Alec mean calling Her 'mate.'? So, he was not the only one to see

it. She looked tired. 'Have you slept at all?'

He squeezed her. 'Don’t get accusing me.'

'He wouldn’t leave your bed.' Alec told her. It thrilled her that he had stayed by her, why did Alec sound so grumpy about it?

'He wouldn’t let me sleep on the bed.'

'Why are you smiling?' She asked her finally to come to their door. He opens it.

'Alec isn’t happy with you.'

'You are happy that I pissed off the cat?' he raised a brow leading her in. 'What did I do?'

'You wouldn’t let him sleep on the bed.' He pouted.

'No use in letting him start now, he will only break it when he gets older. See he is fine right there.' Alec had curled up right near the fire, seeming perfectly content with himself.

Someone had built a fire and left. Besides them, no one else was in the room. 'Will you stay?' His grip on her hand slackens enough to let her pull away.

'Do you want me to?' Her throat tightens and sweat breaks on her palms. She had not slept in the same room, knowingly, with Her since they were Bound.

It was too late to take the words back, they were out. She waited for him to leave or stay. She did not know what she wanted more.

'Stay.' his grip tightens again around her hand.

She had not expected him to say yes. The room suddenly felt too crowded, his hands too warm even with the block of

ice swirling around her belly as he led her to the bed.

He watched him kick off his sandals and scurried to do the same as well as take the darts from her hair. Her braid slapped her back as she scrambled up into the bed scooting over to make room for her husband. What now? What did she do now?

She watched with fascination; it was a simple move. All he did was take off his vest and slide into bed, but it was the most graceful thing she had ever seen. He watched him roll to get comfortable, he slept on his side.

'Come over here.' He tried not to bristle or shiver at his words. It was easier to do the former when he said 'Please.' She scooted forward letting him roll back the covers and tuck her in. He had to feel her heart thump into his chest. She had never been so close to him like this before.

'What are you doing?' She asked bewildered when his head nuzzled into her neck. His breath tickled. She had not known what to expect but this was not it.

'Going to sleep.' He said, burying his head into her hair. He hoped she had not missed a dart. She squirmed to get comfortable, he did not let her move

much else. She could not get away. He listens as his breath becomes shallow and even.

'Her?'

'Mom?'

'Why did you sleep before?' What had changed?

'You weren’t safe before,' his words grumbled out. 'Nothing will happen to you here.'

Because this place was sacred? or because he knew and trusted the people here?

'Her?' He murmured. 'Her?' He was asleep. Truly sleep.

He snickered feeling his snores hit her jaw. She was not going to wake him even to tease him about his horrible snoring. It could wait. Over on the rug, Alec had rolled over onto his back in front of the fire. His mouth was slightly open, his pink tongue hanging over the side of his mouth. The last thing he looked at was terrifying. His tail slithers side to side every occasionally, darting into the fire and quickly away.

Between wondering if she would have a burnt kitty kit and Herr’s snores, He fell asleep. Looks as though Cousin

Grean has had a bit too much to drink, Westcliffe said, signaling for two footmen. get him to his carriage.

Ansley looked over to see Sheffield grinning like a loon. Finally, I will have a nonboring tale to tell, he said triumphantly. I would keep it to yourself, Sheffield, Ansley warned.

Of course, old boy. But he was fairly bouncing on the balls of his feet as he shouldered his way through the men who had gathered around at the commotion. Apologies, he said to the men. I could not let an insult to Welford go unchallenged. Drink up.

Westcliffe took Ansley's knowing that she was one of the fallen- and would reveal wings and fangs when the trust was made, and the dissented of dark-magic- and craft, the arm and led him to a distant corner of the room, Stephen following in their wake.

‘Sh-h.’

What was that all about? Westcliffe asked once they were away from prying ears. He questioned the legitimacy of Jannie's child. You must know everyone is questioning it. it does not matter. She was with child when Welford died. The courts will recognize it as his.

His words were spoken with too much vehemence. Both of his brothers were studying him as though only seeing him for the first time and as life. it’s none of my concern' Westcliffe began. No, it is not, Ansley assured him.

‘His not going to become like us?’

He strode for the Palace doors trying to hold her head high, it was hard. Her world felt as though it had been flipped upside down, she did not want to tell Nevaeh or Meridian who walked beside her. They would think or know that the Golem’s poison was finally starting to affect her and take her back to the Dancer’s Guild. She could not tell them,

so He fixed her eyes on the walk ahead. It was not hard with Nevaeh by her side to keep her steady.

'Almost there.' Nevaeh murmured to her softly. He nodded, her body was not tired, but a dull ache began to beat in her temples and her vision sometimes blurred out of focus if she moved her head a certain way. The quicker she got Genny and Away out the better. The quicker she got everyone she cared about to safety, the better.

'Where is everyone?' He asked as she realized that Meridian, Nevaeh, and her own were the only footsteps to be heard wandering the Palace Halls. The

only sounds besides that were the swishing of her Dancer’s skirts that Nevaeh had fetched her. It sent chills to her spine. It reminded her of her first day coming back to the Palace after the Fire.

'Don't know.' Meridian said uneasily. 'It almost reminds me of the time when the King went missing, the whole city was placed on curfew for days.' At the same moment, Nevaeh hissed for them to hurry. They did, all of them spent for the Prison’s Keep. A side staircase took them under the palace. His head ached too much to take in her surroundings. She just knew that one moment there had been sunlight pouring

in through massive windows, the next their world was under the earth with only torches and mage-light to see. Rows of cells lined the left and right side of the hallway; He did not investigate any of them. Not until she heard. 'He!' It was Genny's voice. His head snapped up towards its direction.

Genny's face peeped out from between the iron bars. Her face was covered with soot and dirt, a grim smile lighting her face. 'You're all right.' relief flooded He's chest when she heard Genny's voice. Unable to do more, He nodded. She was unable to bring herself to tell her that she did not have much

time left. 'You shouldn’t have come here, they-' He cut in before she could start to chastise her.

'Where is Away?' She demanded in a deep voice, Genny's voice stilled, her feature turning into stone. It was not hard as stone, He bet if she pushed hard enough Genny would crack to a million pieces. Conflict warred behind her dark eyes that were almost black in the sunless space. Finally, she came to a decision.

'They are trialing him today.' He paled too, beside them Nevaeh and Meridian tense. His mouth went dry, and she had to close it. There was nothing she

could say. 'What!' she found her voice; it was too loud. 'What could they-'

Again, there was conflict before Genny sighed. It was a small gesture that made her tragically beautiful, and then she was shaking her head. 'They think that you and he have been having an affair.' He closed her eyes to stop the space from going from black to red. They were crazy, absolutely insane. 'He?' Genny said in a tight voice. 'Everyone knows that-'

'Get her out.' He shoved her lock picks at Nevaeh knowing she knew how to use them. She did not want to hear whatever Genny had been about to say.

'Take her straight to the Guild. I'll meet you there.' Nevaeh stopped her eyes narrowing on her.

'No.' Nevaeh, Genny, and Meridian glared down at her. He drew herself up to full height preparing for a battle. Goddess, they did not have time for this! She was running out of time; didn't they get it?

'I’m not giving you a choice and you don’t have to come.' He tried to make her voice icy as she glared at them all. 'Go.' He ran for the exit surprised to find Meridian at her heels a moment later. Together they ran for the Council

Chamber like their lives depended on it. Away's might.

Their feet were suddenly too loud and slow as they clacked on the stone floors. He burst through the ridiculously huge Council Chamber doors flanked by Meridian. As one eye turned to them, every gaze held the same expression. Shock. He glared back accusingly at the sight of her.

'What is the meaning of this!' her voice rolled through the room like quiet thunder. No one quaked in their seats, but no one moved either. Meridian put a restraining hand on His shoulder, but she violently shook him off. Anger rolled

through her like magic, she wished it were magic. She would tear the walls down around them with her anger alone.

His feet carried her down the aisle towards the lone stand. Away stood behind it, his eyes bright at the sight of her but grim at the same time. At least he looked all right, dirty but not harmed. He thought.

'Lady.' The sneering voice caught her attention; she looked up to the dais and blanched. The highest Biseal sat in the King’s Chair. He sat in She's seat!

'Biseal.' He said with as much contempt as she could sew into that one

word. Goddess, she did not like this man. 'You are in my husband's seat.' She said even when her hand grabbed Away's arm. Her fury only grew when she realized that they had chained him, and his arms were bruised and his hands bloody.

'Someone had to take lead while you were,' he coughed 'absent.' Meridian said that guards had chased them when they tried to remove her from the Palace. Had the Guards been trying to stop them from hurting her, or had they been about to finish off what the Golem had started? No one seemed in any hurry to arrest Meridian and he stood right next to her. They glared at him.

'I wasn't in the best of health.' He said through gritted teeth.

'How are you feeling now?' he asked, leaning forward-looking too interested. He knew without any doubt that he was the one to send that Golem. If Meridian had been telling the truth, then he was the one that had if not started the Fire, then conspired it. Maybe even tricked the apprentices into accidentally doing the spell.

'I would be better if you didn't have my Guard in chains.' She hissed up to him. 'Come down from The King’s Chair.'

'I was voted in for this seat.'

'It was in my absence!' He hissed back.

'My Dear, a lot has changed in your absence.' He sneered. Funny how one seat could make him think he had so much power? He shook off the fact that it had made her think the same. How stupid she had been to think she was practically untouchable.

'Would you care to fill me in then?' He asked neutrally. Meridian had made his way to her side. Biseal spared him a disgusted look before turning back to her. The Lords, all of them seemed to

shift restlessly, they had come to some decision about her, and she was to be told. Now.

'The Gods sent me a vision about you my Dear of what you really are.' He said imperiously. His stomach ached; he was lying. He had to be, there was no way a magician had visions. That was done in the temples, another reason that the two were the opposite. Mages believed in magic; Priest believed in fate. He was lying his fat ass off.

'Oh, really?' He said casually, in her mind she reached for Her, her hand wrapping around her necklace. She

wanted him to hear this. 'What did they tell you?'

'That you are unfit to rule as a woman. That child in your belly is a lie fabricated to keep you here. You have played your part here fairly well Lady,' there went that sneering again. 'But I've been told you didn't share your husband's bed before you were taken to Natali. You were, however, alone often with- him.' he nodded towards Away. His jaw dropped open. She did not know whether to laugh or screech at his lies.

'Those are lies!' Meridian spoke when she found she could not. All He could truthfully see was red. The room

swayed dangerously and for a moment she was not sure if it was the poison taking hold of her finally or if it was her rage. Maybe if she screamed and lunged at him the poison would pour from her mouth and fingertips into his worthless lying form while she strangled him! Her fingers twitched to try.

'This is treason!' He shook her head, unable to stand, not being able to simply slit his throat. 'Away is a friend, a trustworthy friend that has guarded me and my reputation better than anyone in this room can boast!'

'I'm sure he guarded you,' Biseal coughed. 'Very well. Adultery of The Lady

is an act of treason as well.' Biseal said just as easily. She could not believe it. The room sat in anticipatory silence. No one was aiding Biseal in case He got the upper hand. No one wanted to lose their throat for treason. They were not going to help her either. Somehow Biseal had gotten to every member of the Court. She was on her own. Goddess she wished Alec were with her.

'You've already tried to kill my child.' He found her tongue. 'I wasn't here because I was attacked right outside of the Goddess's temple in the palace. That was black magic! Is that the will of the Goddess as well?' He sneered wondering

what he was to say. 'Or is it just your will in the God's name.'

He was so sure he had him. He did not even blink. 'A Foreigner harps of foreign tales of Black magic and Lies.' His mouth dropped. At that moment she saw all the hate that he had held back. Hate mixed with something else that made her skin shiver. Lust?

'I am not.'

'Then why are you not dead?' He asked sitting back waiting for her to amuse him. There was a murmuring agreement from the Lords. He turned to

glare at them. All but a few glared boldly back.

'Because I am a mage.' He told them, holding her head high. It was not a lie; she had a theory that it was the only reason her mind had not completely turned into meaninglessness.

Part:

'He doesn't-' Away began but He silenced him with a wave of her hand.

'Mage?' Biseal said skeptically, his beady eyes looking over her. 'I think not.'

'I know so.' He stood proud. 'I’m a Truthteller.' The room erupted into

laughter. Even Biseal chuckled in his snorting laughter. He glared at him. 'It is true,'

'Show me?' Biseal asked-

'He, don’t.' Away began. He shut him up with a glare. She was doing this for him, to get him out; he did not need to know that she was already doomed. He was not telling her not to say anything for fear of them knowing she was a mage but because he knew what she was going to say.

'I can’t,' she took a deep breath and told him. 'I haven’t felt my magic since I put out The Fire.' A rumble of

comments rippled around her. Even Meridian shot her a funny look, a skeptical one but still shocked. 'I- I don’t know when it will return.' She held up her hands in a helpless shrug that left Biseal purple. His head was purple; it reminded her of a pimple that needed to be popped. He took a step forward and was snatched back. Meridians wrapped his arm around her shoulders pulling her close to his side jostling her. He blinked, Biseal’s face was normal again. It was red, not purple and it did not look like a pimple but damn if she would not like to squish it anyway. Especially when he said.

'You’re a dirty little liar that was never for the good of Ysterym. You are the reason the Gods have forsaken us. You are the reason our King has fled. It is… You; it has always been you!' His mouth feels open. 'You’re the Black Omen upon Ysterym. Nothing will be put right until we do it.' Behind her, there was a murmur of agreement.

'But- I,' words failed her as her knees turned weak. For once she was speechless. Instead, her hands slipped into Meridian’s pocket pulling out the picks she had begged him to find. The room fell into an eerie silence. Away just

looked at her in shock. Everyone else looked nervous.

'Are you completely off your head?' She heard Meridian say with a quiver in his voice. 'She is the Queen, no matter what you think she has done. It does not make it true! There were bad omens in Ysterym long before she came and will be here long after we go to our graves. You are a fool!' He wanted to cheer. Instead, she hedged away from Meridian. He knew what he was doing and silently thanked him. This meeting had shot to hell quickly, they needed out. He slowly inched towards Away who stood in horror and rage as he looked at

Biseal. Like he wanted the man’s throat. Gods, He had never wanted anything so bad.

His hands firmly gripped Away’s wrist, after she did this they had to be prepared to run. She looked at Away. He nodded; his face determined. She had to remember to tell him that Nevaeh had gotten Genny out before he went off to look for her. The picks turned in the lock with an audible click. He winced even as the shackles fell into her hands from Away’s wrist.

'Seize her!' He flew backward behind the protective stances of the two men. Meridian tucked her safe against his

back as he whirled around to meet the sound of sliding swords. Despite herself, He was intrigued by them. They were different than any sword she had ever seen. The blade instead of being straight and pointed, the were sickled with a blade's edge for a tip. 'Take her in, all of them in for the use of Black magic against Ysterym and treason against the king’s name!'

'No!' He gripped Meridian's arm. She looked at Away, he did not have chains shackling him, but he was in no condition for a fight. Meridian was too exhausted to fight. He did not want to

fight them. She simply wanted Biseal’s head to roll.

'There isn't another way out.' Meridian hissed. His belly rolled. She knew there wasn't.

'Do you have a weapon.' when he did nothing but look at her, He cursed before belatedly realizing she did not have a dagger on her either.

'Grab Her, get her!' The first guard charged them. He easily dodged his stupid attempt at them.

Meridian grabbed his swords as He kicked him down to the ground. Her foot rolled him over to his side. Just in

time to trip the next guards charging them. Somehow Meridian fought off two, three, until away was able to pick up the sword and help. He was tucked in close beside Meridian. Away stuck near her open side. He could not believe that their duo was fending off a troop.

It was obvious that Meridian was a sword's man he held his weapon like it was a part of his arm. Away was an assassin and held his own. Both kept their bodies in front of He as though they were her breathing armor. She watched in awe as Away stabbed a nearby guard that had tried to do the same. Rushing forward He raided him for weapon’s praying silently

to the Goddess to forgive them all, and herself. She came out with a short dagger and a sword that she was only moderately trained to use.

'Thank you.' Away easily nicked the sword out of her hand as he twirled into another fight. They were still progressively moving forward towards the huge Council doors.

Part:

'Hey-' He wished she had thought not to distract them. A trio rushed her friends at once, each taking them in a different direction. One the left, the other right, and one came at the front and

center. Meridian sliced through the first one while away hacked back the second. The third rushed past them right for He, his blade aimed for her chest.

'He!' Away tried to trip the guard but was forced to engage another guard who had rushed forth. His eyes widened as her body reacted, twisting into itself. He twirled out the way slamming into Away’s side as her hand that held the dagger lashed out. She felt it connect with something hard yet soft and sink in. She squealed as the guard went down, a fresh spurt of blood flowed from a side wound. By the Goddess, they were painting the Council Room red. No one

moved to interfere, to help, they were completely alone. He rubbed her head, a serious pain tingled along her spine and up into her head.

'Princess!' He jumped looking up to the dais where the King sat. She could have wept.

'She?' He nearly dropped her knife in a burst of joy at seeing him here. He would set everyone to right. By the look on his face, no one here today would pay for what they were doing.

'He waits!' He ignored Away’s arms; he did not understand that they

were saved. She would help them straighten this whole thing out.

He picked up her Dancer’s skirts as she ran for the dais dogging around the fallen bodies of the guards. She had to make it back to the dais where She was. He stood tall looking down at her, a grim smile spread on his face that made her want to hug him even more. She just needed to get to him.

'She!' He reached out for him as she ascended the steps. He reached for her snatching her forward with a force that made He gasp. The momentum slammed her forward into a solid chest, she could have cried out.

'Goddess, I’ve missed you.' He said on the verge of tears. She wanted to cry and scream. He wanted to kiss Her for coming home at last and not leaving her with this mess. She looked up into his scowling face as he looked out at the Lords.

'I know Princess, never again I swear.' He hugged her tightly. 'Give me the dagger.' He reached for it. He hesitated.

'I-'

'Heania.' Her voice became stern. 'Give me the dagger.' His hands took it

from her fingers while she tried to decide whether she should hand it to him or not.

He sputtered up at him about to give him a piece of her mind, but she was twirled around to face the Lords. Why were Away and Meridian still fighting? Didn't they see that She was home, they could stop? Her mouth opened to yell for Away or Meridian before something sharp nicked into her neck. The world stopped, He froze, like a blade bit into her skin. It was her blade- why would She press a dagger to her throat?

'Don’t say a word or I will slice you open.' The words made her shudder

at their coldness, she meant it. He was going to kill her.

'The baby-' He began-

'That bastard can die with you.' He head-butted him; it must have stunned him because She roared as he stumbled back, the blade pressed dangerously into her neck. He gulped but must have cried out because Away and Meridian turned to her as one. Both stood stunned as she felt. What was going on?

'She?' He asked tentatively-

'No Darling,' The voice sounded like She. He shut her eyes against his words, he had told her no. He must have

been telling the truth, she never called her Darling. 'Drop your weapons.' He was not speaking to her; He guessed he spoke to Away and Meridian. She winced when both did so without hesitation.

'Don’t you hurt her.' Meridian stated through clenched teeth as if that would somehow remove the blade from her throat.

'I cannot hurt the dying.' She heard a soft murmur in her ear. It made her shudder. 'You are dying aren’t you Darling?' He wanted to shake her head but ended up just shaking, period. It earned her a cruel laugh. 'Seize them!'

'No!' His words broke through her haze. This was not happening, not again. Please Goddess let this be some horrible dream. He prayed with her eyes wide open as she lunged forward the blade sliced into her throat creating a shallow cut. He barely noticed the hot slice of pain. 'Let them go! Please!' Guards rushed the two men; she saw their weapons being kicked out of grabbing distance. Two guards stood on either side of Away and Meridian as they tied her friend’s hands behind their backs. This could not be happening, but it was. She was letting this happen- he was doing it! He thought fast.

'You can’t.' He started louder and more confident than she could have ever thought possible.

Part:

'Away is under diplomatic immunity, if you touch him, you risk a war with Natili. We cannot afford a new ally to become an old foe. It is not Meridian’s fault, I threatened to take away his land and title if he did not help me. You have no reason to hold them here, banish them and be done with it.' She frowned but shrugged.

'If you keep fighting to get her not only, will I kill her outright, but you

will also both hangs.' Both men stopped their advancement. The room rustled finally; the Lords broke out into wild murmuring. He would outrightly kill the Queen. He heard bits or what they were saying. 'Still, she might be telling the truth, there might be a child.' She turned them out again to favor Meridian and Away who was eying her stubbornly. If they stayed any longer, they would do something rash that would get them killed. They had to go.

'Go my Lords; you’re both dismissed from my service.' He said as Queen as she could. Her legs felt as though they would buckle, her whole

body just wanted to explode from frustration and anger. This was unfair, it was not right, it- a flash of pure hit struck her body, and she felt her magic boil up out of pure frustration. He reached for it desperately only to feel it retreat. Frustrated tears pricked her eyes, she blinked them away quickly.

Neither of the men moved. He frowned. 'Guards!' she called while pleading with them both. 'See that Lord Away and Lord Meridian make it safely outside the palace walls.' She said watching more guards come forward to flank them. 'No harm will come to them.' He said as menacingly as possible.

'No harm will come to them.' The guard, the lead guard, decided when he took a stance before her. His eyes glittered with a look He did not understand, anger? Was he angry that he had to obey her? His lips were pinched tight as he gave a curt nod to his team. Meridian and away were dragged from the room. He winced when they struggled.

(Hindmost to Nevaeh)

Brainwashing is running rampant right now. When intelligence is based off-on a Halo of sociology this is what you would get, by the perception of using your

power of mind remembering to think for yourselves the truth is seen.

All human life and existence matters, everybody has the 14 amendments to not be discriminated against a biased or prejudiced in any kind of segregation like pigment for skin for any tune equality to any kind of race or existence of that of humankind.

Likewise, it is time to kindly stop the hate crimes move on with your lives and realize that we all have a constitutional right of equality in fair in this country of the United States of America, stop being feeble-minded.

At the age of 5 in 1999, this prognosis was made of the above with the same idea of being nothing more than theoretical- and only counties based in giving to the student, and somehow by twisted words of letting the word-of-mouth dictate this has become a mentality slur to me, that I do not have, yet was wrongly given for countless years.

We need to understand the report that was said and retold to some was dated when I was 5 years old saying I was at the understandings of the higher mind of 7 years of age.

No. I am open in saying that I have never relinquished my rights to have this acquired whatever, it was given agents my free-well... and at no point, an endangerment to have what was listed, yet claim to this was nothing more than a falsehood of defamations.

I wanted my wrath on the world. I find it utterly disgraceful, disheartening, deplorable, and more than rechargeable the state in which our country is right now gives me much sorrow and disappointment, and despair applicable to that of a dismayed, dismal, dreaded, of reality.

WE have the right to free speech as our 1st amendment- not the right to be a TARD by being dimwitted.

Everyone, that I have gone to school with was and still is aphasic, let us not just say one of them rolls their crap into balls and eats crayons more than others here, you can call that temperament if you wish, yet it is all just categories, to perceive and overlook or exaggerate.

Alexia has an acquired reading disability because of an acquired event such as a stroke. It is most common for alexia to be accompanied by expressive aphasia (the ability to speak in

sentences,) and agraphia (the ability to write.)

‘Why did my life SHIT THE BED?’ 'Simplemindedness' is apparent to those that are simplistic,' in mentality and diagnostics of intelligence quotient- that do not at any time bring forth higher thinking and learning.

(Back)

I remember the place that was not a dream another world a historical monument in my honor, the building that was a mile long and a half-mile in with, a world that I grasped in my mind was

becoming true to others, that I was going to make mine.

A boat ride through reflecting shallow waters would take all of use to my world, child after child in boats all around me, to the passage to the underworld, amidst a lamp flickering, hanging from the front, all the faces were soft, distorted, and ominous. A rain carton of mist, and waterfalls around every column.

Then in this new world, I saw Away's face was horrified, his eyes wild as they dragged him down the aisle and out. Meridian was not any better. The door closed with a heavy thud, she

swallowed hard as the blade pressed close to her skin.

'If your intent,' slightly murmured tightly up at him. He still heads the knife, her hair, he still holds the power. 'Is to kill me, you should press the blade down further.' She told him to wait for him to do what she instructed while hoping he would not have the guts.

'Worthless foreign-' the blade pressed down so swiftly He said her last prayer prepared for what was coming.

'Think of the child!' a voice cried from the pews of Lords. 'You cannot murder a woman with child!' He

investigated the crowd to see a young lord, one of the young lords she had scolded long ago in her first sit-in after her Coronation.

'There is no child- it is a figment of this liar’s darkest imagination. She is mad!' She cried out, the blade pressing closer to the vein pounding. She barely dared to breathe. How this could be happening to her.

'Lords, I swear to you it is not.' He spoke as quickly and loudly as she dared out to the Lords watching her closely. 'I am no liar.'

'Right.' She spoke. 'Because you’re a truth teller.' His tone was mocking. He closed her eyes praying that this was over quickly. He knew that she was a truth-teller. He had exposed her to what she was the moment they were Bound.

'She is rash, and unruly.' Came an ancient voice. It made Him open her eyes again; she had never heard it speak before. 'If we have learned nothing as Lords, we have learned that a woman deserves mercy- fairness. We do not know if she is lying. She must stand trial before we decide what the best course of action is.'

A ripple of agreement arose from the council. It gave Him hope; she hoped that there was a chance. 'We can contact a healer of our own, if she is lying then she will easily be found out.' There were more murmurs, some good some bad. He held her breath as much for the blade pressing into her throat as waiting for the Lords to decide her outcome.

'For the sake of the Goddess, Biseal let the woman breathe.' An ancient Lord said tiredly. His vision saw, Biseal? Had he just said Biseal? His brows furrowed, the man holding her was She did not they see that?

A sharp movement brought her forward and back into something solid and hard that left the back of her skull aching. He hissed, her head turning to glare up at Her. She paled instantly. The color drained from her face down her body before dissolved into the floor. She was not the one gripping her, it was Biseal. The poison had messed with her mind yet again. Making her see what was not there, Goddess she had thought that Biseal had been She and she had played right into his arms. He shook her head trying to make sure this was not a dream. Desperately she wanted someone to wake her up.

He stood behind her looking triumphantly smug with the blade still poised in his hand to strike. A mad glint in his eye flashed saying that he almost did not care one way or the other if this group of men saw him strike her down. He might be glad for witnesses of her death.

'We should Cage her until we can find a judge for her trial.' He wanted to rail at them that there would be no trial. At the ancient Lord whom the others seemed content to let speak for them. Even Lord Kane did not utter protest though his eyes flashed when he looked her way.

'Trial, trial for what?' Biseal shook his head, unable to believe that someone was speaking against him.

'For her life.' The Ancient One snapped at Biseal as if he were stupid. 'I will not put an innocent woman to death, not one with a child. Not one who maybe has done nothing deserving of an executioner.' He wanted to nod but did not dare.

'And if she is telling the truth?' Biseal snorted as though it were unlikely. 'Surely you don’t want this unstable woman holding the Crown.'

'She can be tucked away in the summer palace, comfortably until her husband’s return.' The Ancient One seemed doubtful at the thought of She is return. His wrinkled and worn brown face creased with worry and acceptance. He shook his head. 'Oh, of course there was a will put in place if something like this ever did happen. The King had it tucked away for safe keeping.' He felt Biseal tense.

'A will? Where?'

'Only a select group of Council Members and the Temples know where it lies. There was no reason to bring it out because she-' he indicated He. 'Was so

adamant of The Kings impending return but we cannot hold it off any longer I suppose. A successor must be named.' His stomach dropped. What?

There were more murmurs of agreement. More nodding heads, His stomach swirled.

'If she is found guilty.' Biseal asked before the agreements were finished. He glared at him; something in his voice told her that he would be sure to do everything he could to make sure she was.

'Then the judge will rule whatever punishment he sees fit.' The Ancient Lord said serenely. 'It is fair.'

'Will she rule again?' Biseal asked.

'Without her husband, no.' he looked at Him and she wanted to believe she saw sadness there. Not pity but just concern for her. 'She should focus on her child ... if there is one.'

'There is.' He said before Biseal could tell them differently. Suddenly blew out a tired breath. She wanted to tell them everything. From the beginning. She wanted-

'Take her to the Cages.' There was no time. 'Maximum Security, at least two, no three, guards stationed around her at a time.' Biseal commanded.

Guards sprang forward; their grips were gentle compared to Biseal’s iron hold. He sagged against one of the Guards; it must have startled him because he caught her.

'Lady-' He shook her head before he could get himself into trouble. To this room, she was no longer the Lady. She was just a foreigner, a disgraced woman, a traitor. He cringed at the last one as another guard walked on her other side. She felt better having them around her,

shielding her from Biseal’s glare. She was getting away from him. Not for long, she knew but she was still breathing.

'Take her there!' Biseal commanded. 'We will have a judge by tomorrow and get this straightened out.' He stumbled. She would be dead by tonight. How was she even lucid now when Aisling was confident, she would not be able to remember his name. Could this all be a dream?

He pinched herself and gasped. It defiantly was not a dream. This was truly happening. The Guards took her arms gently and led her from the Council Chamber but not before she heard the

Ancient Lord and Biseal arguing. 'If she isn’t hiding anything then she will have nothing to fear.' Beal's glare could be felt on the back of her head.

He shut her eyes if she had no intention of hanging, she would have to admit to treason.

OH MY GOD, PEOPLE! I am sitting in class at this very moment posting this for you guys who I love. He was stabbing at my brain for me to post another chapter, so I had little choice.

~*~

He did not twitch, just watched her through those long eyelashes. A

sleepy could be an outright bored look on his sharp angular face. He could be assessing her as an enemy. He was an enemy until she found the underlying cause of all of this. That little speech he was trying to pull off put him high at the top. What was he hiding?

'It's been far too long Lady.' Meridian held out his hand to her. He shook her head. She might be trying to set up who was in charge, but she hated formality.

'I told you it’s He.' She took his arm, letting him lead her out of the council chamber into the too quiet halls. The few they did meet gawked openly,

giving the three of them as wide a distance as possible.

'Must be the crown.' Meridian patted her hand assumingly.

'It could be that.' She inclines her head. Or it could be the near hundred-pound Mystery Ice Cat following at her heels.

When one man collided with a wall, He had had enough.

'Are you, all right?' she took him by the shoulder examining him herself.

'Stunned deer.' Alec purred at her back. 'Frightened.' he could not be, who would he be frightened of?

Up close He saw that it was a youth, he could not be any older than fifteen summers and looked strikingly familiar.

He jerked as stunned by colliding with the wall as her touch. 'Yes-' his eyes caught the crown, he blinked and blinked again. 'Lady?'

'Lady Hernia.' Meridian corrected at her back. Alec growled low enough for her ears alone. He did not like Meridian or just thought he was being a smart aleck.

'No, right, I meant- I've never met you before.' he marveled at her a moment longer. 'A pleasure.'

'Pleasure as well.' He let him take her hand and squeeze before pulling away. He would have a bruised head and nothing more. 'What is your name?'

'Kaleen, son of Lord Kane.' ah, that explained the resemblance.

She did not know Kane was married nor had a son. 'Kaleen.' she nodded, backing away from him to Meridian who waited. By his robes, he was a Mage apprentice, what was he

doing wandering the halls here and not at the university?

'On to your classes now.' The meridian sounded almost bored and short. He waved at the boy as one would a servant.

Kaleen bows to them both. 'I'm sorry about what happened to your husband.' His throat closed instantly. Before she could ask what, he meant Meridian barked.

'To class, now!' Kaleen scampered away and was gone around the corner before He could speak again.

'What did he mean?' He croaked rounding on Meridian. He had done that on purpose. 'Tell me.' she had to stop herself from growling. Alec did it for her, stalking for Meridian if she had not grabbed his collar, he would have Meridian's ass against a wall.

'Not here.' He admired his ability to keep his composure. She would not be that cool after having a near hundred-pound cat with sharp fangs and claws very well. She was sure there would have been hysterics. 'Please, He trusts me.' He grabbed her hand once more setting off. Finally pulling her into a room she had never seen. It was a study.

'This is part of my private rooms.' He pulled her inside, shutting the door. Meridian guided her to a chair expecting her to sit. Alec planted his big but squarely in front of her and looked up at Meridian. Just looked until the man took a step back and another. Putting half of a rug between them.

He bit back a snort as she felt Alec's smugness radiating through their bond.

'Hungry?' starving, He shook her head. What was it with everyone trying to feed her?

'No, Meridian.' He watched him sit across from her and do the same. It made her feel more comfortable. Now she was to do the fun part. Pick at his mind. 'Tell me true, you know something you aren't telling me.'

'No one knows what has happened to your husband.' Meridian shook his head. The light shining on his face made him handsome. He leans in hoping he would do the same.

He did. 'But you do.' She was confident. She saw all she needed to know run across his face. He did know something. Under all the sincerity, grief-stricken, burden heavy enough to make

you choke demeanor he was hiding a secret.

'All I know are the rumors, Lady, nothing more.' He shook her head. She knew all about the rumors.

'What about the people that were trampled today. A priestess was stoned today along with the Dancer she was trying to protect. She watched carefully.

Meridian did nothing but blink. 'I wasn't away from anything going on like that.'

She did not believe him. She doubted there was much he did not know went on around here.

'There is a rumor going around that your husband abandons his title, he left because you are leaving drove him mad. The Gods are enraged and will turn their backs on us for the disrespect of our king.' that didn't sound good. 'I'm guessing, those people who caste the stones believe it.' It was not good.

He clamped her hands together and closed her eyes. 'I don't know what I am going to do.' She sniffles as she had done many times when she was young. Dealing with the men in her life she found tears got reactions out of them the fastest. 'I am Queen, and my husband isn't here for me.' she opens her eyes to

see Meridian watching her intently. The way a hawk watched a bunny. It gave her chills. 'I'm not sure how everything works, you see I am still new to this...'

She turned her lips up with a rueful smile. She was sorry for being uneducated in the Vestryman way. 'I'm sorry.' she sniffles. 'I didn't mean to cry.' shaking her head she was scared that it had not worked. Meridian was a cold snake that would not fall for anything, not even the frustrated tears of a woman. Inwardly screaming, He stood to leave. 'I better leave.' She headed for the door, Alec standing against her side keeping himself between Meridian and her.

'Lady, wait.' Meridian stood coming for her. He took her hand, He had to force herself not to shudder and blink up bewilderedly at his charming smile. 'You stunned me, your tears.' He waited. 'You need someone here that is solely here to protect you. Look after you.' That was why Alec was here. 'To be your ears and to rely on.'

He did not have to force the watery chuckle. 'And who would that be. I do not know anyone here that well. Except Her and I'm unsure of where he is.' she let another tear slide down her cheek.

'Rely on me malady.' He squeezed her fingers.

'I can do that?'

It was supposed to reassure her, He was positive the smile that bloomed was supposed to make her knees weak and mind all gooey spilling out her ears at his feet.

'Always, Lady. I'm sworn to the crown.' but not to Her.

'That is good. As soon as I have plans, I will give you instructions.' He nodded; it was impossible to tell what he was thinking behind those dark eyes. 'Oh, do you know where Nevaeh is?'

He stiffens. He raised a brow in question that wasn't' the reaction she usually got when she asked about her maid. She had struck a nerve.

'I'm sorry, Lady Nevaeh is not to be trusted.' He looked said. 'She is a spy; she is I have little evidence to confirm it now, but I will in a couple of more scouting.

'What?'

'I don’t feel it is in your best... interest to trust her.' his nose crinkled in distaste.

'She is one of my Women.' He pursued her lips in a frown. She did not

trust Nevaeh either, but she was not trusting Meridian worth stones. 'All of them are trustworthy unless proven otherwise.'

He nodded, slowly. It was all over his face he had expected her to heed his warning. He did not like her thinking on her own. Women were not supposed to do that. 'One more thing, I want a list of the palace finances.' his eyes narrowed but he said.

'Yes Lady.'

Her smile was bright. 'You’re a dear.' she patted his hand and let it go. Alec got to his feet. She had thought he

had fallen asleep, should have known better.

'Let me suggest one more thing.' It did not sound at all like a suggestion. 'Assign yourself a personal guard. Two if you can.' he persisted. 'It would make everyone who cares about you feel better, I know Her would feel better.'

He frowns disliking the idea instantly, Guards were supervisors, babysitters, spies. 'I already have one.' Alec turned to Meridian baring his fangs and growled low and fearsome. Meridian paled but did not move from his perch. He was impressed.

'Think about it at least, please?' he appealed back to her. 'I’m beyond words that you are safely back home where you belong, it would hurt more than I can say if something happens to you because you don’t want guards prying into your personal time.'

She did not know whether he was deeply concerned or the best actor she had ever seen. She did not know what he had to gain, but it must be something. He was a courtier; they did not spend time flattery and slivery words with no benefit at the end of it.

'I’ll think about it.' at best.

He tried not to run for the door, Meridian watched her every step until she closed the door and leaned against it. It still felt as though his gaze was burning into her back through the wood. Letting Alec lead the way they all but ran to her room and locked themselves in.

He pulled out the pin that Alec had found for her and walked the distance that connected her room to Her’s.

Alec followed her in, his pink nose crinkled. 'someone’s here.' he charged, plowing her into the ground. In her ear, the sound of whistling metal passing by and its thump behind her told

her how close she had come to death. Alec knew it too.

His roar rang through the room vibrating off the walls. He did it again, moving further into the room and again. He covered her ears getting to her feet, if he kept it up, she would be explaining to the whole palace. Alec stopped in front of a tapestry hanging on the far wall. 'She is here.' Alec snarled low.

'She?' how could he tell?

'She is bleeding.' Alec's nose crinkled. 'Female shells... Heely why do females bleed?' he went from her angry

protector to her curious kit in the bat of an eye.

'I don't know.' He lied, getting to her feet coming forward, pulling a dart from her hair careful not to touch the numbing cream on the unsheathed tip.

'Do I kill?' Alec appealed to her. 'Or pounce? Mate said it was fine if I kill.' His head tilted, thoughtful.

He silently promised to smack Mate on the back of his thick head for this. At least he had thought to ask her.

'Don’t kill.' She told him; his head dipped. He leaped on the tapestry. Bringing down fabric and a cursing figure

wrapped in them. He was right it was female.

'If you move, the poison I have aimed at your throat will silence you before you can twitch.' she would be dead in moments, quicker than it took to sneeze or scream. He kneels beside Alec pointing the dart at the unknown’s chest. 'Lady?' He froze before pulling back the curtain.

'Nevaeh?'

The woman stares up at her with wide brown eyes. The same way He was doing her. 'What are you doing here?' she spoke first.

'What are you doing here, trying to kill me?' He recoiled away

'I wasn’t trying to kill you.' Nevaeh said slowly. 'I was protecting, he hasn’t been gone that long, not even a season and those ungrateful wretches are already trying to break in here.'

He grins. 'Say that again.' Ungrateful wretches. Nevaeh grinned back looking at the dart.

'Does that really poison?'

'Yep.' He sheathed it away in its holder helping Nevaeh to her feet. She looked the same, still breathtakingly pretty.

'I’m glad you are home, where is Her?' she looked over He is shoulder expecting to see him leaning in the door frame. He was not there, a small pout formed on the woman’s lips.

He sighs, she had to stick to the lie. There was too much riding on it just to put Nevaeh at ease she was one person. 'I don’t know. No one seems to be able to tell me.'

'He went to save you!' Nevaeh exploded. 'How could you not! How did you get away?'

'I struck up a trade with the Natali king in exchange for a horse and my freedom.'

She did not believe her. 'That worked?' He shrugged.

'I had a council meeting to attend. Couldn’t be late.' For some reason that confused Nevaeh even more as she took in, He is crown and clothes.

'What council meeting, there isn’t supposed to be one today, it is forbidden to hold council on the third day.'

Well, they were doing the forbidden, she had just attended a meeting in the council chamber. 'I’ll

ignore it this once because I needed to see them regularly. Now I need you. Nevaeh.' The other woman dusted off her skirts shooting angry looks at Alec who shot his looks back. Alec snarled, his fur standing on edge. He pressed his flank into He is side but did not do anything else. 'Nevaeh.'

She had her attention now. Good.

'What has been happening. No one can seem to tell me simply.' if at all.

She never blinked when she spoke, he did not need her magic to feel the weight of Nevaeh's words. 'Treason.'

He nodded, she felt that much in her bones.

Good Christ, is it yours? Westcliffe asked, his lips barely moving.

It is Jannie's.

He left his brothers staring after him. In the length of a single heartbeat, everything had changed.

you are so fortunate to be with child, Lady Inwood said. You should pray for a son. Then you will not be dependent upon Glean Demure's mercies.

Sitting in a corner of the parlor, surrounded by women, Jannie felt as though there was no air to breathe.

Ansley has certainly been a godsend, hasn't he? Lady Sheffield asked. He has handled so many of the arrangements.

Was it her imagination that she heard insinuations in their voices? Why could they not leave her in peace?

Will you return to Herndon Hall now? someone asked a voice she did not recognize.

no, no, you must still be in Rockville, Lady Inwood insisted. to be a widow and with a child?

You need us to see you through it.

From time to time since the funeral, a few of the women made a morning call, but it was always awkward, and they were all so incredibly boring. Except for Lady Inwood, who had no qualms whatsoever about spreading gossip. She had even offered to let Jannie join in the wagering surrounding Ansley. He had made it known early on that he intended to select a wife this season, and while he had yet to attend a ball, speculation was high that he had already made his choice. Jannie did not want to acknowledge how it unsettled her to know that he was searching for a wife.

She certainly had no desire to marry him, doubted she would ever marry again. She heard the clatter of horses' hooves and the whir of wheels on the cobblestone. A coach approached. As it drew near, she recognized the crest on the door. Ansley.

Her heart leaped, and she fought to calm it. But it increased its tempo as he stepped out, obviously on an outing, dressed in a swallow-tailed jacket. On one hand, he held his top hat and walking stick.

He disappeared, and she refrained from opening the window to lean out and strive to catch another

glimpse of him. He had not visited since the night of the funeral, the night he held her while she wept. The night, to her immense embarrassment now, she lashed out at him. A thousand times she considered sending a note of apology for her outburst because she missed him. As much as she did not want to acknowledge it, she did. Often since leaving Blackmon she thought of him always with guilt. All her thoughts should have been on Welford, although she now knew most of his were not on her.

The knock on her bed-chamber door had her coming to her feet. yes.

Lily stepped inside. his Grace, the King of Ansley would like a word.

She felt so drab and dour, already in her nightdress. But for her this Season there would be no balls. Tell him I am not at home. No. She shook her head. That would stop him. Tell him I am already abed ...no. Drat him! send him up. yes, m' lady.

Jannie moved over to the sitting area, positioning herself so a sofa was between her and the door, would be between her and Ansley. She did not want to give the impression that she was extremist glad of his presence. It was inappropriate. A girl in mourning was

supposed to be sedated, not anxious for her caller to arrive.

When he strode in, she thought she had never seen a more handsome man. Based on his expression of horror, however, he had never seen a more disheveled girl. Your Grace, how good of you to call. for God's sake, Jannie we have been through do not be so damned formal.

It is late and this is my bedchamber. Formality is needed. You appear to be on your way to a ball. I was, but I changed my mind when I saw all the carriages lined up. I was not in the mood for a tedious night. He set his hat and

stuck on a chair near the door before prowling toward her.

You are near enough, she said when it became obvious the sofa would not serve as an obstacle for him.

Thankfully, he did stop, but his gaze wandered over her and she felt it like a touch. you are not eating, he said.

I am… just not very much. I suppose your mother told you that. She dropped by each afternoon for a few moments.

I do not need her to tell me what is obvious. I daresay, you're not sleeping either some …I' She sank into the chair. I

do not know what is wrong with me. you are grieving.

I do not know if that is it, Ansley. I feel nothing.

He studied her for a moment before saying, 'I have come to invite you to have dinner with me tomorrow evening at my residence.'

I am in mourning. It would be entirely inappropriate.

Jannie, you need a few hours away from all this. Wear your widow's weeds. I'll bring my carriage 'round at half-past seven. I will carry you out if I must. Ansley' Jannie.

She wanted to shriek. She did not know if she had ever known a more obstinate man. Yet neither could she deny how lovely it would be to be with someone who did not treat her as though she might break at any moment. THEN- Very well, she said petulantly. He must be given the impression she was not giving in too easily. Good. He removed his jacket and laid it over the arm of the sofa.

She sat up straighter. What are you doing? going to ensure that you sleep well tonight.

(Ansley)

Jannie. Reaching into his waistcoat pocket, he removed a small vile. What is it? oils. I am going to rub your feet. It will help you relax. no. She tucked her feet beneath the chair.

You will start with my feet and then you will journey upward and ...it would be entirely inappropriate.

I promise I will not venture higher than your ankles.

She shook her head. My ankles are swollen. You do not need to see them. move to the sofa. Or better yet, the bed. do you not listen to a thing I say? What are you afraid of, Jannie?

That I am swollen and miserable and that you will be repulsed by me.

I am so sorry, she blurted.

He furrowed his brow. for what, pray to tell? for lashing out at you ...the last time you were here.

I did not take your words to heart. I know how difficult all of this has been for you. unbearable sometimes.

So-o tonight, I will give you something pleasant to take into your dreams.

He held out his hand, enticing her with those long, strong fingers. come along, Jannie. Move to the sofa.

Against her better judgment, she did as he bade. When she was settled in the corner, pillows at her back, he sat at the opposite end and lifted her bare feet to his lap. Mesmerized, she watched as he poured several drops of oil onto his palm before setting the bottle aside. Then his palm kneaded her sole. on, dear God. nice? He asked.

THEN wickedly wonderful. You have done this before.

I once knew a woman who knew a great deal about the sensuous arts. and you did not keep her? She was not mine to keep. Close your eyes.

She did, as his fingers worked their magic over the balls of her feet. Tell me a story, something from your youth. my youth. Well, I was a very clever child.

His odious voice drowned on as he told her about playing a game of hiding with Claire. The deep timbre and his constant massaging of her feet lured her away to a place of no troubles, no grief, no sorrow.

She awoke from a deep sleep with only a bit of sunlight dancing into the room. She did not remember climbing into bed, nor could she remember the last time she felt so rested. She was beneath the covers but aware of a weight on her

hip. Ansley's hand cupped over her. He lay on top of the covers, his waistcoat gone but his shirt and trousers were still in place. He must have carried her to bed. How tired she must have been not to stir when he moved her.

His long dark eyelashes rested on his cheeks. She did hope her child would inherit those. In truth, there was nothing about him that she did not want to see in the child. She had missed him so. She had not wanted to admit it, but the truth mocked her now because it was so lovely to wake him up in her bed.

Slowly he opened his eyes. Good morning.

His voice was rough from sleep, stirring her in ways she should not be stirred, reminding her of other mornings.

So, lady Inwood told me that you had intended to find a wife this Season. ohm. Yes, I had considered it. I still might. He gave her a devilish smile.

So, the women are wagering, you know ...on whom it will be.

So are the gents, from what I hear. Even my brothers, blast them. who do they think it will be?

So, they've both chosen different women. They are both wrong. One woman talks so quietly that I must always bend

over to get near enough to hear what she is saying. Marriage to her would give me an aching back before too long.

Jannie laughed lightly. and the other?

So-o the opposite problem. When she begins to speak, I must pull back in order not to go deaf from her caterwauling. Makes me appear to have some sort of twitch. I had no idea that the wife hunt was so troublesome. It is quite a bother. You should marry me to spare me the horror of it.

He was teasing, surely. Still, she shook her head. I think I shall be like your

mother. A girl of means who can do as she pleases. I would always allow you to do as you please.

On, Ansley, you do not half tempt me. She rolled into a sitting position and saw the time on the clock on the mantel. good God! It is half past ten! If someone sees that your coach' I send my driver on.

She glanced back at him, and he gave her an innocent shrug. I never leave my coach outside a lady's residence. And if I had not admitted you?

I would have walked, caught a hansom. I am resourceful. He pushed himself up, leaned in, and kissed her

cheek before she could stop him. Then he got out of bed and crossed the room to retrieve his waistcoat, neckcloth, and jacket. Let us have some breakfast, shall we?

It was the oddest thing, but she was suddenly quite ravenous. you must leave at once afterward.

You have my word. you may borrow one of the rooms if you wish to freshen up.

After bowing, he took his leave. When she reached for the bell pull, she realized she was smiling.

She looked better, much better, this morning. The circles were still there, but not as dark. He would see to it that she slept well tonight, so perhaps tomorrow they would be gone completely. And she was eating. It was ridiculous the pleasure that realization brought him.

She wore black. He wanted to see her in red.

-How long do you intend to stay in Landcaster? he asked.

Her brow furrowed, she glanced up at him. I am not sure. Another week or so I suppose. Not much longer. I dread

returning to Herndon Hall. come to Grant wood.

With a sigh, she shook her head. Ansley' you have few memories there. You do know it is quite rude to interrupt. my apologies. But I can decipher the objection written on your face. Hear me out.

So, extend to you a courtesy you do not extend to me? Why ever should I? you are irascible when you are with a child. you are stubborn, she said.

(Quiet.)

Like- we will discuss it during dinner this evening. so, you will join me? did you ever doubt it?

His answer to her was merely a grin. He had not been teasing when he suggested she marry him, but based on her expression and response, she was still too fragile to consider such a proposal. He had won over her once before. He could do it again. It needed only a bit of patience.

No. Jannie could hardly believe the excitement that thrummed through her as she waited for Ansley to arrive. A night away from the oppressive house. She needed it. She knew that she did.

She wished she did not have to wear black, but it helped to remind her to remain somber. Tonight, was simply a break from the mourning. It did not remove it altogether.

She was sitting in the parlor trying not to appear anxious when she heard the rap on the front door. Her butler was soon standing in the doorway. his Grace, the King of Ansley.

No. He bowed out and Ansley strode in, so dashing in his swallow-tailed coat that it very nearly took her breath. He had worn similar clothing last night, but for some reason, he appeared even more handsome now. Lest he decides to

try to kiss her on the cheek, she lowered her veil.

I daresay, you did not have to go to so much bother for dinner with me, she said as she walked over to him.

Part:

He extended his arm. no bother.

She placed her hand on his arm and allowed him to escort her from the house. I have been looking forward to this, she confessed.

(As have I.)

He handed her up to the coach. As she settled onto her seat, he took his

place opposite her. The coach lantern was lit, allowing her to see him. She was surprised that he had not chosen to sit beside her. The last time they journeyed alone on his coach, they had been so close that a shadow could not have squeezed between them.

As the coach rattled over the cobblestones, she felt compelled to fill the silence. The air is less cloying tonight. It is better in the country. Do you not like the city, then? It serves a purpose, but I must confess that when I am married, I shall come to Rockville as little as possible. I prefer the outdoor activities offered in the countryside.

It was no doubt the reason he was so fit and that his skin was so bronzed. What is your favorite sport? she asked. Swimming. I recently had a small pool built at Grant wood. If you come to visit, I shall teach you how to swim.

She imagined the slickness of their wet bodies, gliding over each other. right now, I would no doubt sink straightaway to the bottom.

He grinned. I doubt it.

Although the curtains were drawn on the couch and she could not see the passing buildings, it did seem that they had been travelling for some time

now. I did not think your residence was so far.

We will dine at my residence, but I have a little surprise planned first.

She had had far too many surprises of late. And what would that be? If I tell you, it will not be a surprise. This was not what we agreed to. Trust me, Jannie. You will enjoy what I have in mind.

She became aware of the clatter of more vehicles and Ansley's coach slowing. we are in the thick of it. you may peer out if you like, he said.

She considered it. I shall wait.

Eventually, the coach rolled to a stop. A footman opened the door and Ansley disembarked before handing her down.

They were in an alleyway, but still, she recognized the building.

Covent Garden? Are you mad? it is closed to the public tonight. then why are we here?

He smiled broadly. because it is open to us. I am in mourning. I cannot be entertained.

You shall not be. The actors are atrocious, from what I hear. Taking her

hand, he led her toward the steps and a back door, where he knocked.

It opened and a wizened man peered out. Yours Grace me… Smith. this way, sir.

They went through back hallways and up to two flights of stairs to a private box. Mr. Smith at once left them. Jannie eased down to a plush chair. Is this the royal box? no, it is mine, Ansley said as he joined her.

How did you manage this? easily. it cannot have been easy. let us just say that I am a man of influence and leave it at that, shall we?

A man of influence, of wealth, of generosity. A modest man. She had been so afraid to trust the feelings she had developed for him during the month they were at Blackmon. Could it be that she had seen the real man there? Lights lit the stage.

The curtains were drawn back. Jannie leaned forward and allowed the actors to transport her to fair Verona.

He had considered paying the actors to perform a comedy. He was certain she needed some laughter, but in the end, he had decided that she needed to shed some tears. He had had a devil of time leaving her this morning.

He focused on her now. She was giving rapt attention to the performance, as though she was on stage with them. Her eyes had been filled with excitement when he arrived at the residence. It had done his heart good. The exorbitant amount he was paying for the private use of the theater was money well spent.

Theirs had been an unusual courtship, which began last November' even though he'd not realized it was courtship at the time. Courting her now was a bit more difficult because of all the social mores that insisted she is in seclusion.

As the star-crossed lovers were mourned, he saw the tears begin to trickle down her cheeks. He wanted to wipe them away from himself, but tonight he intended to be only a friend. So, he handed her his handkerchief and watched as she delicately patted her face.

And then a heart-wrenching sob broke free. He moved in, wrapping his arms around her, turning her into his chest, holding her nearby. He knew her sorrow had nothing to do with the performance. She was weeping now for all she had lost and all that faced her.

~*~

I hate this, she said. I hate that I am all weepy. you have earned the right to cry.

Straightening, she eased back. It makes me feel weak. You are hardly weak.

He could see her studying his features, and he wondered where her thoughts wandered.

Taking a last swipe at her tears, she squared her shoulders. I suppose we should be off. are you ready for dinner, then? I am quite famished.

Dinner took place in Ansley's garden, with candles flickering on the

small round table, while the gas lamps sent out a soft glow. She could shill the roses, and from time to time she caught a hint of his fragrance. you have gone to a great deal of bother, she said. Not I. My servants. And I pay them well enough to do it.

The Cages, to He is horror, had been exactly as they were named. They were cages, dome birdlike cages with iron workings. They swung several hands above the stony ground. He leered gloomily at the stone fortress that was the entrance to the prison, the cages were not in the Purgatory, they swung beside it. His fingers clutched at the iron rods

desperately trying not to think of how her body would feel if it fell to the mean stones below. Her stomach rolled as a harsh wind made her cage rock dangerously.

Part:

The air whistled through the bars and slapped her cheeks. It was almost painful. She felt like a condemned bird that had been put on display before its execution. She sat high enough to see over the palace walls, but it was low enough that her food, water, and even another chamber pot could be poled up to her. She knew part of the reason she was up this high was that Biseal wanted her to

have little contact with anyone as well as minimize her chances of escape. There was little chance of that, both of her wrists had been shackled to the cage floor every time they rustled the guards would look at her questioningly. At least they were not cruel; if He knew better, she would even think they felt sorry for her. Her head pounded painfully, and she felt sicker, she needed to vomit but it would not come up. It just spread through her body leaving her weak and shaking harder than a dying note on a novice musician’s lips.

The fire was the only thing burning in the King's room when She

opened the door. The University must be using a lot of magic to know the mage lights out, again. He was going to have to be firm with them. He had been much too lenient with them. A sharp pain cut through his chest that he had to push away. All his training was not enough, but he could not let his grief get the better of him. Grief destroyed the weak and She knew he could not be weak. He would have kicked his ass if she had even suspected it. She was too kind, letting the University draw on needed magic and shut themselves away from the rest of the Median. He was going to have a serious talk with the Highest Basel.

Soon, tonight. No not tonight but first thing in the morning before they all came to pound upon his door with their condolences. He did not want any of them, they were not fake grief-stricken faces for his behalf. They were pleas for mercy or at least they would be as soon as he found out what truly happened to Heania.

She collapsed into his chair before he fell. It had taken four days to make it back, the horses had almost broken from no rest. Honor must have thought he was insane, he felt like he was going insane. He had not slept in four days! How could he when he felt the

blood-stilling fear of being hunted? He had felt it all, everything Heania had felt when that Thing chased her. It hunted her down to right outside the Palace Temple. It let her get that far, to a place she thought she would be safe and killed her there. It is in the center of a dark hall.

Her head fell into his hands, it was not true. How could it be when he could still hear her voice when it was quiet? Like a loaf of bread for the starving. She felt starved with titbits of food being shoved his way. All of them were soaked in poison. 'She!' His voice had been desperate, scared too. 'I love you.'

He wanted to claw his eyes out, he never should have left her here, alone. He should have taken her with him and Ysterym be damned. He still would have had her, them, both. For Goddes's sake, she had been pregnant! And they had not cared, whoever had done this to her had not cared one way or another.

A strangled sound wrenched from his throat. He sounded like Alec when he was trying to get his audience's attention. Gods, poor Alec, the large adolescent guardian had to be sedated just so the priestess could collect Heania's body. They had taken her back to her room. She was there now but she would not be for

very much longer. The spells woven over her body to keep it from decomposing would unlock on the seventh day, the last day of mourning. Then he would have to let them build a pry and let her burn.

A hard knock rapped on his door. It was not the door he had when he left. It was newer- he would never get to ask He why she had not liked the old one. 'Request an audience tomorrow!' he called. The knock came again. 'Enter!' they heard that.

A petite shadow slipped into the room clicking the door shut behind him. She tensed, who would dare not announce themselves. 'It is just me.' Nevaeh's husky

voice filled the quiet room as she slipped the hood of her cloak back off her face. It was as he remembered. It was tightly drawn; her eyes were puffy as though she had been crying.

'I'll get a report in the morning Nevaeh- thank you.'

'I didn't come for that.' she said hastily. 'I just came to be sure you did nothing stupid, or rash.' he would have smiled at that once before. Now it just made him angry.

Part:

'I fear there is no energy in me to do either.'

'I'm sorry.' she seemed to falter, her eyes falling away from his direction. 'Lady Heania was…she was a gift.'

'Yes, she was.' and she was gone. My wife is gone. Regret stabbed him so deep he wished he could turn to something, anything, to ease it. A prayer, a bottle of ale, a knife. None of them would ease this burden.

The silence stretched for a moment more, until She was sure that Nevaeh would leave. He was not company to be had at all. Lily and Honor had long ago retreated under his rage, the whole council had accepted his return and quivered under it. 'You should sleep.'

Nevaeh's hand touched his arm, not pulling away even when he flinched. 'Please?'

'How can I sleep when I can't even think of anything else beside Her.' he asked not meaning to appeal to Nevaeh but found little choice but to ask someone.

'Company helps.' Nevaeh shrugged a little unladylike for her perfect facade. She was too perfect in everything she did. In her words, in her duty, in her skills, he had taught her. If she had been a mage, she would have placed her over the University a long time ago. 'If you would like, I'll stay the night

with you.' she would not be much company herself with her swollen eyes and hollowed cheeks. 'I just- I wouldn't want to be alone at a time like this.'

'Of course, you can stay, you're one of the only people I would allow to see me this torn apart.'

She ran a tired hand through his hair. 'I can't show weakness.' not with the city already so divided. The University was determined to split the city in two between magic and temples. The City's people loved his wife, from the temples to the pickpockets. The palace had a heart that bled soured milk for her. It was like his mother all over again; her

disappearance had torn apart a country. What would He's death do?

'That's how they destroyed He.' Nevaeh's small voice flitted to She's ears. He was on his feet in a heartbeat. His hands gripped her shoulders wanting to shake her.

'What!'

'She was going to have a baby- they would never allow a bastard to be crowned heir when so many others wanted the damn seat.' Nevaeh shook her head blinking back unshed tears. 'She showed a weakness when she announced that.'

'It wasn't a bastard! It was mine!' She found himself roaring. 'He was never like that- never.'

'I don't doubt that.' Nevaeh shook her head gently, taking his hands. 'She talked about you like you were the next sunrise when she wasn't cursing your name.' He wanted to smile but did not dare.

Nevaeh's body trembled a bit, all the unshed tears finally caved in on her. They rolled down her cheeks unchecked. 'I am so sorry! Forgive me?' she would have thrown herself to his feet if She hadn't caught her.

'What for?'

'I just left her, she told me to take Alec and go to bed. I didn't think to stay with her and now...' She shook her head as she shook his head.

'Nevaeh that was a Golemn, it would have killed you too as surely as it did Heania. It is not your fault. Whoever made it will bare all blame.' and all his wrath because there would be no mercy, none. 'Come on your shaking.' She pulled the cloak off her to give her a blanket he favored on cool nights. It was no wonder she was shivering when all she wore was her simple nightgown. Her hair was so tousled he was certain she had tried to

sleep and could not. Her voice was husky because she had woken up from bad dreams in tears. Poor Nevaeh. 'Sit.' He tried to put her in a seat, Nevaeh simply shook her head. Her eyes were cast on the flames. They danced to her eyes and cheeks until they practically glowed.

'I want to stay, but we both need to get some rest. She, before the sun comes up, they will be at this door.' she pointed. 'They can't see that your half blind with grief.' She pulled him towards his bed.

'Lay with me,' he froze, his whole body jerking unsure that he had heard her right.

She stopped too, looking over her shoulder at him with a frown. 'It is nothing but comfort, so we don't have to be alone. Alone with our guilt.'

-And-

‘What will this give us?' She asks, shaking his head.

'A false peace.' Nevaeh shrugged. 'Just for the night, I promise.' Nevaeh always kept her promise. He had nothing else to do but drown in his grief. His wife was dead and beyond his help. Nevaeh heard and all but begging for comfort. Something they both needed.

She waited patiently, one hand innocently clutching the cover over her thin nightdress. She was his friend, but she was not a child. He would be foolish to think of Nevaeh as a child when he had seen her bring grown men to their knees. He would do anything for her, even this. He wanted to do this. It was a way to forget. 'Here.' he pulled her closer, away from his bed. He did not want her there yet.

Nevaeh went without protest. She came to him letting his hands touch her puffy face, her hair, her chest. When he pulled her close, he felt her soft mouth kiss his shoulder, the base of his neck. His

skin flushed under her warm breath as her head leaned against the chest. Little moans escaped her mouth as his hands slid down her body coming back up with the hem of her gown until it came off over her head.

Someone sighed, Nevaeh did as they heard the gown fall to the floor. She could not help looking at her, her bronzed skin just seemed to glow in the firelight that also added a reddish haze to her deep brown hair that covered her face from sight.

'She.' Nevaeh said hesitantly reaching up to wrap her arms around him. Her lips planted kisses on his arms,

shoulders, his cheek as she lifted on tiptoes to reach his ear. 'I-' a blood-stopping scream filled the room. Right into She's ear as he threw the source halfway across the room. His hands went to cover his ears to keep the horrible screams out. They just got louder and louder until he was sure the whole palace would wake.

'Nevaeh stop- don't!' she just screamed and would not stop. It was not her voice at all. It was a higher shriller. It was the scream of someone whose heart was breaking letting in all the fear and terror the Gods gave into it.

Then closed her eyes against the setting sun; she tried not to think of it as possibly the last sunset she would ever see. Her eyes wanted to burn from her head.

She just waited to scream away her headache and give over into it all. All He did was whimper. 'Lady,' someone hissed. He ignored it as the wind. Until it came again. 'Lady!' The voice was daringly loud. A guard was trying for attention.

Nevaeh's naked body lay crumpled on the floor as her screams continued to pierce the night until he wanted to join in with her.

'Heania!'

Engorgements:

'I want to say I believe in new talents in writing, like the Neveah manuscript. We have chatted briefly about his work, and I would say he can go for his dreams. I did. If I must give an opinion, I feel he can do it,' says Lauren Oliver, writer of Rooms and Before I Fall.

https://www.webwire.com/ViewPressRel.asp?aId=203719

Lauren Oliver is an American author of numerous young adult novels including Panic; the Delirium trilogy: Delirium, Pandemonium, and Requiem;

and Before I Fall, which became a major motion picture in 2017.

Hastings Public Library:

Endorsement: for Nevaeh- the new novel

Hastings Public Library I am writing about Marcel Duriez's books. I have been a library director in Hastings, Pa for the last six years. I have purchased his first two books for the library and have recommended his books Cuddles and Sammie and Ellie to our patrons to read to their children.

The parents and children both loved books. I am looking forward to his new book coming out for teens (Nevaeh

Natalie.) What kid would not love this book! I have reviewed the book, and I have to say it is overwhelmingly worm, not too long not too short, and imaginative, something children would love to look over, at bedtime!

I have read over some chapters in the manuscript, and I was captivated, along with all the others he has a reading team that felt this need to be in all teenager's hands. I feel the same- as they do. I hope that it will be in print very soon. He is an industrious young man, and I wish him much success.

Sincerely, Bernadette Dillen

Hastings Library

Audrey Brothers/Konior 'Few individuals can creatively utilize two talents, Duriez is one such person who can.' Duriez’s books have a blissful, cheerful interior and exterior. The stories are intriguing and interesting, as for as the Illustrations there eye-catching and gives the feeling of being drawn into his stories.' The Star Courier /Mainline Newspaper (Article by Audrey Brothers/Konior, page 15/A June 28/2012)

Paul Walker: Teacher/ Musician Northern Cambria Catholic School, St. Benedict School Indiana University of Pennsylvania Bachelor of Science (B.S.), music education Endorsement: for

Neveah 'I have just read the above rough draft and would like to recommend it for endorsement. My name is Paul E. Walker, and I am a retired music educator who taught Marcel as a private student for over 6 years I have a minor in English I know the editing look-over I did was okay. I have reviewed some pages in the manuscript, and I cannot believe how I got drawn into this story. I see much of what he has personally experienced going into this work. I am looking forward to the print book. I would say those mature teens would love reading this story. Bullying is something I see as a teacher, more now than in the past. Kids cannot

get away from it even now when they go home it follows them online, just like in this story. This book may help those that are bullied cope and think before they act. The book is very readable and neat. I mostly have book sets, for young and teens.

Endorsement by: Chris Cramer: Creative Director at Poke the Bear Productions. Director with Moreau Movie. American Musical and Dramatic Academy Shirley Prasko: Accounting Gormish Chiropractic Team- Dr. Daron Gorsich & Dr. Clay Gorsich.

Marcel Ray Duriez

Dear Mr. Or Ms. Bookworm:

Forgive disturbance and interruption for your moment to review my material of what could be a future classic. I was more impressed with your analysis of your literary background in history that captivated my fancy, which brought forth utter delight and hysteria. I am hopeful that you will be encouraged, interested, stimulated, and moved, in representing my multi-perceptive novel.

I have a diverse cast in the topics that are hammering home right in

freedoms, of mind, body, and faith, life, and death.

I have many points of view, yet Nevaeh's experiences at times you will feel as if you are walking in her shoes, questing equality and equality right within a novel, also have many possibilities for that highlight gender expression of free will. This story is a literary fiction novel, for a teen reader yet has strong content: ANGEL’S IN DISGUISE OR THE NEVAEH SAGA the narrative points switches every five pages, keeping the imagination moving onward.

The Nevaeh Saga is a narrative in magical realism that focuses on the thoughtful look of a young girl, facing pain- as she bares her soul and what lies within.

The narrator Nevaeh May Natalie of the story is the same main character, throughout the entire story, one continuous protagonist, from youth to old, to the afterlife.

However, points of view are changed by those within her life at any given moment. When other characters have a right to a voice, the name character will show along with his or her

part of speech expressed giving feeling and movement to the story of emotions.

A fourteen-year-old Nevaeh is having a midlife crisis likewise does not seem to bode well with her life expectancy. Her so-called school friends bullied her, whatever semblance of a foster mother drowned out her fights with life by loathing her for being alive, falling, and grieving her way to mental delusion. Now a fallen angel Nevaeh speaks when she did not have a voice, to do so before her untimely death- as she bares her soul.

I was born in 1991, in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, USA, and raised in a small

town of Northern Cambria, previously known as Barnesboro.

Currently, immense, unique, and unusual background in my experiences of writing and the arts.

I am more than qualified to tell a story like this for my English background coming from- The Art Institutes and SNHU, and Alison Diplomas, and ten years of pushing. Fundamentals of English, Grammar, and Writing with a late expert's inauguration in English in creative writing. I am currently holding a bachelor's level in General education, from SNHU as a transferring student.

I currently have 98 other self-published works.

Published in numerous online and paper formats, like- magazine Let Fire, Web-Wire, The Our Town Newspaper, and Marline Newspapers, for the Star Courier.

My degrees at this date are in BA.GDM Graphic Design, Architectural Engineering Technology and Civil Technology, Residential Planning, (CDA), and Writing.

My diplomas are under Fine Art and the Fundamentals, Health and Human Development, Advanced Physics,

Children's Studies, Music Theory, English Grammar, and the Fundamentals, Electrical Drawings and Test Equipment, Educational Psychology, English Language and Literature Writing.

I am part of the Kappa Pi - ETA Sigma Fraternity. Along with the National Technical Honor Society Fraternity.

I have several children's books currently self-published, The Many Adventures of Cuddles holding a five-star review from reviewer Mamta Madhavan: for Readers Favorite, saying: A delightful and captivating storybook for children.

The Many Adventures of Cuddles: Tobey, Pandora, and Cuddles. The book was featured in the 2016 Book Expo America (BEA), held last May 11 to 13 at McCormick Place in Chicago.

And Sammie and Ellie: How I Met my Family.

I believe in new talents in writing, like the Neveah manuscript. We have chatted briefly about his work, and I would say he can go for his dreams. I did. If I must give an opinion, I feel he can do it, said New York Times bestselling author, Lauren Oliver, writer of Rooms and Before I Fall.

Thank you for your time in reviewing this, And I hope that the enclosed synopsis will pique your interest. Reachable at the address and phone number above, as well as via email at duriez19@gmail.com. I have enclosed my mailing address of 419 Juniper St. Of Northern Cambria, Pa, 15714, asking for your convenient interplanetary mail, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Marcel Ray Duriez

Now at book 70 and counting, 2,700,000 words and more to come said as short as possible, summaries 70+ Nevaeh Saga books all having 99 editing scores, with Grammarly and word online alike. 15,500 pages,13,435,928 characters breaking world record if published 74,358 paragraphs.

Nevaeh Saga every book summary:

Nevaeh is a 14-year-old girl living in Pennsylvania at the start of this story around the 2000s. The feeling of the story is just because she is the small girl in her

class, and has other kids, classmates, mother, grandmother, and even her guardian, putting her down, does not mean that Navaeh cannot rise above all the hatred and shine.

On the darkest day of her human life, Nevaeh commits suicide. However, that is not the end of her young life, but the start of a miraculous supernatural life beginning. Neveah remembered as the girl who existed. In the notebooks of her life.

Likewise, in a town, that to her is just as backward as her temperament is at times. Just like her name spelling also, she lives a life of bullying.

Nevaeh feels that death is a way out of the pain. Before she passes, she lives her life out to see all that she has lost by choosing to relinquish to death, at the age of 14.

Leading into an afterlife story in the books to come of her becoming a fallen angel. An evil entity with wickedness, wanting pain, and death is always lurking in the darkness of cobwebbed-filled minds she has obtained from twisted brainwashing.

Nevaeh becomes lost in her mind, and the minds of others as more points of view as the story progresses, in this new

afterlife. One Naddalin, an unknown sister, of many siblings.

Top POVs other than Nevaeh

Small town Pennsylvania, Nevaeh May Natalie was born in 1996. Bullied by teachers and students alike, to name some Mr. Mendocino, Mr. DeVolcano all call her to retard and braindead to her in class. Made to be Sped-Ed yet is brilliant. Had child Jaylynn Naztherth, lost child, to suited death at the same school with the same teachers, as she went too. Hold on to a teddy bear, to feel safe, most of the time, thumb-sucker, and sad to be regressed in mentalities, to 2nd grade. She loved Lily, before marriage. Nevaeh

is mysterious, attractive, and creative. Eyelashes could put you in a trance as she blinked.

She is so petite in her stature, 95 lbs. high voice, dislikes school, and her hometown. Is jailed for anything and everything. I love pink and artwork. 8 siblings yet felt alone.

Naddalin Natalie was born, the daughter of Leah and Ray. She had six sisters. She died on July 19, 1995. (Still Born death the same day as birth.) Titus Back is the stepdad and oversees this child's way.

Chiaz Naztherth was born in 1997. He had one daughter with Nevaeh May Natalie. The sentimental romantic boy- to man, coal mining in the upcoming stories, meets his love in Highschool.

Lily Anderson and her twin sister Nevaeh May were born on July 19, 1995. She had six sisters. Known for her pigtails, John Jackson pulled them in class and was too shy and soft-spoken. Mr. Anderson, take the part of dad. Is dating Nevaeh on and off as a gay girl. Her hobbies include drawing, singing in her church's choir, and braiding her hair with ribbons that match her outfits. picked on by J.A Cowering. Lily is (Sped-ED)

Candy Sheldon, Elizabeth Smith, Megan Davis, Taylor Brown, Joseph Shaw, Kassie Row, Kassie Row, and even the teacher Miss. Stackawitz is a distraction to her and picks on her daily saying names of slander.

Adriane Amsel was born around 2002, the daughter of Leah. She had one brother and six sisters.

She is a junior in the family. She has black hair with red tips. She has green cat eyes.

She is squat and bumpy, emo-gothic, and a ringleader. She is satanic, manipulating, and brainwashes prey.

Sarah was born, the daughter of Leah. She had one brother and seven sisters. She died in 1997. Death by mother, in shaking / washing machines. Also is The Girl in the Window.

Alissa Amsel was born, the daughter of Leah. She had one brother and six sisters. Is a blonde hair, blue-eyed girl; she cannot weigh any more than one hundred pounds, yet she is taller than most of the boys' gangly looking, the main squeeze, of the girls, bullying gang of the clan sisters, Alissa, she towers in her overall authority, control, and influence, in the society's ranking of a rheostat in the high school, having mom, dad, and

grandpop behind every move of taking over. Alissa is a senior the head cheerleader, she makes everyone that she wants to be associated with being her friend, and the ones she does not want to be her fools. A refusal to bow down to her authority, she does everything in her power, to make your life miserable; Alissa is constantly smothering Chiaz Naztherth, with her crazed oversexed clingy on Nevaeh's lover.

Ava Amsel was born on November 19, 2000, the daughter of Leah. She had one brother and six sisters. The takeover of all wicked, she has a

crush on Nevaeh, it is not wrong if you are the law,

is a brown-haired girl she, is so petite, yet she is bigger than Nevaeh, athlete, not coordinated, scholarship holder, anybody she wants popular as mating, liar, oversexed, the fourteen-year-old curving object of desire is Nevaeh.

Jaylynn Naztherth was born, the daughter of Nevaeh and Chiaz. Suicide death in her high school, losing a baby within her body. Her mother Nevaeh May passed away in 2010 at the age of 15 yet has angle immoralities.

Devein Chino was born, the son of Leah. He has seven sisters. Death by the hands of his mother, and dad.

Leah Amsel had a child with Ray Jay Natalie and another that was taken away, and many- other than Nevaeh. All the children with other men, 6 girls other Nevaeh, and 1 boy, having kids at an early age. She worked for an orphanage as a caregiver. Lost ownership of all Nevaeh, and her kids.

When Ray Jay Natalie was born in 1957, his mother, Hope was 24 he had one son and four daughters with Leah Amsel he died in 1993 at the age of 36.

He likes classic bricks and loves his baby girls.

Benjamin Huber Black was born, the son of Hope Natalie-Black. He had one brother. He died on September 11, 2001, in New York.

Hope Natalie-Black was born in 1933. She had one son in 1957. She died in 2010 at the age of 77. Lost son in the war, took over the part of the mother for Nevaeh.

Grandpa Amsel had one daughter with Masel Amsel. Wartime, given in the Vietnam war, only town police officer,

PTSD, he was nothing more than a revolutionary and seducer.

Masel Amsel had one daughter with Grandpa Amsel. Owner of a large home with graveyard executes children within orphanage for fun, caretaker of trust by the town, of over 200 kids ages five up to fourteen. Also, the town of Meyer, and overseer of all that is population.

Titus Back had a child with Leah, that true- child is unknown. Yet he calls himself the stepdad, to one of the children that Leah had, yet is not sure, yet ends up looking after Naddalin, in the afterlife.

On with the story, Nevaeh must learn the hard way in everything she does, in this supernatural life.

She must see everything she was giving up by dying. Nevaeh's tormentors the four Amsel sisters will try to destroy her though-out all the books, as evil angels.

The problem, Nevaeh has a hex of losing everyone she has loved- after her death as punishment, like her baby girl Jaylynn and husband- and all to come, to the point she wants to give up on love altogether- yet that can happen when she is immortal.

The fix, she helps other girls that pass young, that have fallen see their way, in a world of the afterlife of enchantment and wizardry.

Moving on with one of many backstories, Nevaeh’s granddaughter finds out true love prevails overall, just like real life. Kristen's grandchild of Nevaeh becomes the new target she is kidnapped- and the hex is passed down the line; however, fate has its twist.

Kristen learns how to fight in the U.S. Marine Corps. Karly and Maggie- and all the other girls in the story are all mixed up teen girls giving their life stories, girlfriends, boyfriends, and dating

making out and up, hooking up, and all that makes popular- or not.

One other story that is a backstory to Nevaeh is Karly Barnes, the girl with blue hair.

Think about all the photos that you post remembering- they just might be your legacy of being nothing more than an internet nudist.

Karly's- secret life on a chat room site- and her love for a girl, and the boy that was nothing, the loser in school, and the one that was everything too- in this story this- girl dies many times until she has an epiphany.

The BFF, Jenny, the head of everything makes this girl, and her BFFs do what she asked even if that means giving up on what Karly loves.

The BFF's that like-like each other, Liv- and Maddie take things to the next leave, on top of school, yet popularity prevails, as more important. The suggestive chat room for girls to be on their backsides becomes Karly's life, yet it is a fast buck and makes her feel wanted and popular. Steamy, juice, wet, raw, hot, lustful, teen girl is lives with dreamy boys, or that wrong but the right girl at the time of why not all out there, just like you.

The moral in the backstory, to explain the front story is, a picture is worth 1,000 words!

The plot of Karly is left out yet only in her mind, she feels at this point- Karly. Who doesn't whom she wants to love? And who loves her- back. Haunted by her past, she wants the old days back- when she was a first-year girl liking a boy and a girl- and not sure on either. The first-ever story is about a CAM girl in her teen years of high school, the secret life of an agave teen girl that needs to feel wanted.

Twist in the plot of Nevaeh, Children being locked up for years in the

oubliette of a room with others, and finding her new freedom, like with girls of the past too, remembering Lilly imprisonment- with Nevaeh foe, locked in an orphanage of incest and creepy bounding, torched for the joy of her owner- the 4 girl's mother, treated worse than a dog. Nevaeh is broken mentally, emotionally psychologically, and spiritually, evenly she went mad because I was not there for her. Numbered with ID tag-ring- hanging the privets.

Death, drugs, partying, and anarchy are all about being popular right- well what it is like for Maggie- the one that is not, you will see both sides of the

stories of teen girls and boys that make life just suck.

Backstory, Ray, and Karly are on and off- and the cute, sweet boy is looking for love to yet, not with Karly.

Liv and Maddie are just being GAY lovers!

They say you fall in love only once but every time I see her, I fall in love with her all over repeatedly. Dating- fun- drinking- getting high- boys music- friends- not loving mom or dad- or just a dad. Loving too much in one way, and not enough in others. Girls talking about the

nasty sex your mom and dad do not know about- end!

Twist, it all started when I opened a suitcase and found my Dollie… Noah and Rallie and Sam and friends set off on one last adventure to lay the princess's ghost to rest- the ghost of a girl who will not rest until the bone-china doll is buried in her unfilled grave. In middle school now, and if there is a ghost, creepy, and haunting, will it let them go now that it has them in its grab? Is the doll just a doll or something evil? Noah pop pushes him to give up fantasy, and Noah quits the game of play yet- not all the way.

But then nothing goes according to plan, and as their adventure turns into a larger-than-life voyage, creepy things begin to happen. Their relationship might be over until one of them announces she has been having dreams about the princess. And this creepy creeper dolly!

I am looking at you- it said! Dollie was feeling me!

Backstory, a sweet love story of a nerdy boy and a popular girl! Nothing beats a long passionate kiss at a football game! Or the romp in the band room! Jenny is losing her mind- at this point!

Backstory, of a girl Nevaeh helps, Haven- Rockville- A boy to girl story, of transgender, and alternative education, over sexual identities.

Haven is held back in school, and made gifted, over her changes, has a tough time fitting in until she meets three triplets, and her life changes dramatically.

School, like all in this long story, is very wrong to those that misunderstand her- and all the others, she is just a girl- that is just trying to find the real girl that she feels that she is on the inside, that she believed always was there.

The BFFs of Haven, one of the triplet girls- that back Havens family- loses a child and have one Haven take her place- in a way for the mother, in the home, even if she is not identical to the others- they all become like sisters.

Naddalin is a young girl who finds the link to the past, is a train that she falls to, in all ways; that is just a possessed as she is by it. The train takes over her body mind and soul, as she starts at wizard schooling, a hidden railway to a new world of good versus evil where all the girls that have passed too young go too before their reasoned; to their new projects to linger within other minds.

The magic starts here, in the afterlife world.

‘This is the story of a lover’s triangle… It was bad from the start. And it got worse in a hurry.’ A steam train for sale- dubbed ‘13’ by its original cantankerous owner- rusting away on a front lawn of their wizard neighborhood.

Her girlfriends know that Naddalin never- ever had much luck in the looks or popularity department, or taken an interest in owning something like this, but 13 quickly changes all that.

She suddenly has the newfound confidence to stick up for herself, going

as far as dating the most beautiful girl at the wizard school, and even as a mysteriously restored 13 thoroughly and terrifyingly consumes every aspect of Naddalin's life.

Her girls and Leigh soon understand that they must uncover the awful truth behind a steam train, with a horrifying and murderous history. Hell, hath no fury like a woman scorned, and heaven helps anyone who gets in 13 ways… adventure to find a lost railway that links to the past with ghosts that talk with them, on the trip, to find the magic.

Backstory, Marcella is a girl that is locked in a room made to author a

novel; Anna Kindrick is kidnapped by the same man named Steven- a man that is just nuts who claims to be her biggest fan. Anna and Marcella- are typing the line in her bed with the laptop. That dies to the outside world.

Note: Naddalin is Nevaeh, in a twist of plot.

Naddalin- celebrates her 14th birthday, then goes back to when she was born. You see, she has lived in her uncle and Aunt's house. The letter she receives is an acceptance and invitation to study at the Skoufyceol Wizardry school for girls. Dark and wizardry in this world.

Naddalin will learn many things about wizardry from his teachers and Headmasters, and from the other girls. She will meet and make friends, life, and death, and return to life from death, angels- black and white.

One death will not change a world-mind, I do not want to be another left behind. The mother Mazel of the 4 girls attempts to take over control of the world and Naddalin's mind, body, and soul- over it is now split with Nevaeh- to keep her alive.

Naddalin gives up, one point and is lost, till she finds her way, in the most unlikely of places; A place for you, and a

place for me, not hell, and never going to be a haven, if your fall, yet if death is calling what more can it be, then Hells purgatory, all crystal ball holds a life's past, and Emmah final death, hold new life for her lover and best friend, yet well Emmah come back, like the girl we know and love, what the trade-off?

The evil problem is AVA and her mother, will return and make permanent darkness for one, new girls will be welcomed to the school for girls, a marched around to remember why they are not going down, they have come after a school shooting in their homeland on

Earth to this new magical underworld world.

The taking down of the Dark Lord, Naddalin finds a way of having Nevaeh back in her life- and back in the world as a whole girl, as more than just part of Naddalin's mind, they have a love for each other, and trust over everything else. Nevaeh finds her place as GOD, pushing away her past loves do it. God- is a woman? …In this world she is.

‘A story of lingering, liberty, and independence- like this one should not be glossed over, by others and will not, understand me, for the bravery, courage, and valor!’

Nevaeh becomes a deity- of her world, letting go of past demons. Naddalin is now on her own- lost in the body of an Earthy girl named Melisa, they find love for each other, and trust everything else when she is made the chosen one.

Backstory, young Melisa- the younger in the fight- a star girl- the type that is not wanted in this overridden land- the Star Games and the Famine Wars- a cataclysmic modern-day holocaust, where the balances of life are their hands and in their erranding- a televised bloodbath- with young love- that what is all about- what drives you the most even in death

eyes, preteenagers from parts in France are chosen at random to fight to the death. With the hope of young life to keep them alive.

Has a spacy, feeling, and new Earth they say, about starting a new race, on what was left of the old Earth, over the fact that Earth was taken over by bots Impressions of life, and the sun is dead, so to keep life going, Marcella had to find a new home on a plant called FDR, where new life there is not happy with us on are oncoming arrival, yet we have no choice, do we?

Starting a new race on FDR, over the fact that Earth was taken over by

bots’ impressions, and the sun is dead, so to keep life going Marcella had to find a new home, where new life is not happy here and her on-coming arrivals of us to their planet. ‘THE SUN BLEW UP WITHOUT WARNING AND FOR NO APPARENT reason.

A world that all books are not allowed to be read, so they are burnt… and a forbidden love airfare with the CEO. We burn books like most have the burning itch to have un-predicted sex now morning, like the alarm, going off to let me know so… its 7 am… on a Monday- and the year is 3070.

When literature student Marry goes to interview young entrepreneur CEO, she meets an individual who is lovely, dazzling, and intimidating.

The inexperienced, innocent Marry is startled to comprehend she wants this man and, despite his enigmatic reserve, finds she is desperate to get close to him. Unable to resist her quiet beauty, yet feels the need to hide, inner and out beauty, wit, and self-determining spirit, He admits he wants her, too- but on his terms.

The couple embarks on a daring, fervently corporeal affair, she determines

the CEO's secrets and explores her dark desires and lust for her.

‘It was a yearning to burn.’ Computers and robots have taken over the world, nobody needs to read any of that shit, or think. Everything is at our fingertips with cell phones, Ipad’s, and computers, without looking through old dusty pages, plus Its agents the law to think for yourself, and read any books.

The year 3080 which at first appears as a utopian society but is revealed to be a dystopian one as the story progresses with a forbidden love story mixed in. How would you like to live in a grayed-out world of sight- where

there is no color and feeling has become cold?

The world's darkest enemies have returned, sacrificing her child for love and love for freedom, those, have been part of Nevaeh, that care the most about have been killed for her essences of life to remain, or have found why to trick the minds that are inside there’s.

Curses and a dark spell with magic, memories- and minds withering, and time without end make a reunion for eternal void for lost souls. Desperate to break the curse. And in her mission, she gets help from an unexpected source; Nevaeh and Naddalin have gone through

countless lives and fought off the world's darkest enemies so they could be together- and that they are, should they be?

Notwithstanding her fierce loyalty, magical talents, and mysterious past. She always believed they were soulmates, had true love- and she still believes it to be true. Even as they pull away to save themselves from the darkness dwelling her soul, linking with cultivates stronger become stronger friends- and tests her love for her and all of them, like never- ever before.

Nevaeh and Naddalin's love at this time- stronger than ever- yet death is

the thoughts that cannot leave Nevaeh's mind, Naddalin and Nevaeh have body and mind flopped. Bones' last test of time. The story of Zoey & Uncle John- and forbidden romance- yet- ‘That's Life- no?’ Zoey far away way be remembering more than her hometown of Hastings- more than the ones that made her end her life all too soon- and tragically.

A story of- a writer wanting to do the right thing for a man that wants a legacy, a story of a poor and passionate young man who falls in love with a young girl, after moving to the U.S of A for Italy, knowing nothing about the ways of the world other the old century and

challenging work, you will go through this romances novel, finding your way to old age, where all you do is look back and say I did okay- along with saying: ‘That's-a life- no?

He well met a young lady, that would give him a sense of freedom. And a new love of life, until the last days of his own. Until the last of hers… Zoey touched my lives including the writers- with her scrapbook- that became timeless- unlike the ones that hated on her- she will be remembered- and they will not.

Middle-grade story heartwarming and feel good along with delightful read. The Shut Generation- (Name can change

if needed) Softball team- young girls come together for a summer to make life-lasting memories.

'A coming of age, a story about a girl getting to know herself and her girlfriends- intimately, all over one summer games of softball- they called this… find out why the legendary Babe of the Yankees makes into the story.'

Babe makes his way into the story and looks over girls that did not agree completely come together and play like girls in a game of summertime ball every night even if their girls, they changed thoughts of men, that girls can play just as hard as boys!

That a young girl can love a girl and not be judged by a town, and even if they would not care, and the memories would last a lifetime and more, the uniforms may have faded like the photos yet not, the flashbacks, of a summer love over softball. A story on the same lines as The Sandlot, a bunch of girls getting together for summer to play softball 2 girls that are interested in becoming more than just friends is kind of the plot, leads into lifelong memories sadness regret in remembrance of all things that pass.

Backstory, Babe Ruth- grandchild is in the story as well as the grandfather of one of the girls in the children who give

the title of the story and the generation that was coming up. Tween book, 'A coming of age, a story about a girl getting to know herself and her girlfriends- intimately, all over one summer game of softball- they called this… find out why the legendary.

The Babe makes his way into the story and looks over girls that did not agree completely come together and play like girls in a game of summertime ball every night even if their girls, they changed thoughts of men, that girls can play just as hard as boys! That a young girl can love a girl and not be judged by a town, and even if... they would not care,

and the memories would last a lifetime and more, the uniforms may have faded like the photos yet not, the flashbacks, of a summer love over softball.

The Shut Generation- Softball team our young girls coming together for a summer to make life-lasting memories. These girls are now here with us, and they would like to share their stories with you.

Backstory, Andy is a wired yet bright teenager who is nerdy- and looks and meek demeanor to the others in his class- he makes himself a favorite target her is a dream girl and the one that does not get him. His life at school seems to

improve when he befriends Jaylynn, a cute new girl who becomes his fast love interest, she protects him from harassment. In a final effort to impress her they both fall deep- and fast in cute love, trusting in each other- for what they both need.

Backstory, Jaylynn Fairytale- One apron a time there, was once an ironic gentleman whose wife lay sickening, with cancer, and when she felt her finish coming, and portrayal close… she christened- to her only daughter to come near her bed, and said: 'darling teenager, be moral, ethical, honest and virtuous, and God, and the one above, that using

the phrase all the days, will always take care of you, in times of low; and, I will look down upon you from heaven high, and will be with you, till the end of your days.'

Backstory, moments that Would not Fade- Every summer, Kristin, Poppy, and Gram live in Gram's house on stands in Ridgeway, near the water. Kristin lives in the Highlands, in a small town, with her father and her grandmother- formally orphaned- and looking for a home and has nothing but snapshots of the past to look back on. Kristin's mother died when Kristin was an exceedingly small girl, but Kristin is content to be who and where

she is- along with moments that will not fade.

Backstory, Martrace 'Hope' Dicksnoter- is a young sweet, smart, young girl who is not loved, yet shows that she is a brain. She finds a home with a teacher and gets what she has always wanted, a loving family. 'It just someday in some year- in 1921- she was let in the back of the 1918 Buick Pick up with a wood bed- and was forgotten about even if it was her birthday,' A very gifted girl forced to put up with a crude, distant father, and mother, Worse, the evil principal at her school is a terrifyingly strict bully. However, when she realizes

she has the power books, she begins to defend her friends from wrath and fight back against her unkind parents.

Why is it a 10-year-old named Bryana must end this way? A story that is touching, and well makes you cry- as you read about this young life that ends too soon, yet young love is what keeps it all together. It was a fight to keep going, yet she did- with the hope of her love in her life… she passed happy, knowing that she had everything she ever wanted.

Neveah is having times where she has remembrances of all things past, that led to flashbacks and then also lingering in otherworldly remembrance.

The backstory to the magical world,

Savannah- A mermaid princess living in secret on land- on what was once Earth- now left dark and mysterious, and the sea foaming in a trance green, are mermaid has ended up inadvertently merged to her insufferable fellow citizen, instead of the boy of her dreams. Overworlds in one can be two.